

Psyllid quarantine plans advance, research intensifies

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — As industry-funded research into combating the Asian citrus psyllid intensifies, California officials are entering the final stretch in considering whether to modify the quarantine against the pest.

The state Department of Food and Agriculture has been reviewing comments received by a June 30 deadline and will likely hold more discussions with citrus industry leaders about its plan to take a more regional approach with the quarantine, said Victoria Hornbaker, the CDFA's citrus program manager.

Proposed changes, which could include stricter controls on moving fruit between designated regions within the state, could be in place within six to nine months, Hornbaker said.

"It's a regular rulemaking process, and technically it hasn't started the process yet," she said. "We've been seeing some expansion of the Asian citrus psyllid into new areas and we've had increased finds in the Central Valley. That's why we're dedicated to trying to find something that will work better for the industry to help



Courtesy Calif. Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program

Grace Radabaugh, a researcher from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, points out an Asian citrus psyllid in a California Polytechnic University-Pomona greenhouse. The university is opening a new greenhouse to expand research into the psyllid and how to prevent it from spreading a disease that is decimating the citrus industry.

them protect themselves."

The idea of setting quarantines by region — the San Joaquin Valley, the Central Coast, the greater San Francisco Bay area and Southern California — was prompted by the ever expanding quarantine zone for the psyllid, which can carry the deadly tree disease huanglongbing.

California's existing

quarantine now covers nearly one-third of the state's total land mass. Portions of Merced and Monterey counties were the latest to be added to the zone in mid-July after psyllid discoveries in those areas.

Under the existing rules, fruit moved from the zone has to be free of leaves and debris and nurseries must be

USDA-certified. With the changes, those moving fruit between regions would have to take added precautions, including wet-washing the fruit.

The proposed changes come as the College of Agriculture at California Polytechnic University-Pomona has opened a 5,040-square-foot research and insect pro-

duction greenhouse that will rear a predator wasp that feeds on Asian citrus psyllids.

The greenhouse was built through a \$400,000 grant from the state Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program, which is funded by citrus growers. Hornbaker said predator insects are already used in urban areas in Southern California to avoid having to use chemical treatments, and they will be deployed in Kern County soon.

Meanwhile, the citrus industry and the University of California-Riverside are teaming to build a top-notch laboratory near that campus that will enable researchers to try to neutralize huanglongbing, which has already devastated the citrus industries in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina and Texas. Numerous other research projects are ongoing.

"We've got some of the best researchers in the world working on the problem, and some of those researchers reside in California," Hornbaker said. "We're working hard with all these researchers to improve technologies, to improve traps and find new ways of surveying for insects and the disease."

Idaho growers reporting strong wheat harvest

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — Though grain prices remain low, Idaho growers say they've been mostly pleased by plump kernels, decent quality and above-average yields at the start of the 2016 fall wheat harvest.

With harvest starting slightly later than normal, some growers have been forced to switch fields upon encountering green patches while cutting their grain.

But they've also reported strong yields, test weights above 60 pounds per bushel and fewer disease problems than expected.

"We're getting a good start on soft white winters, and we're seeing areas from the west towards the east with excellent yields," said Jim Rooney, with Lansing Trade Group.

Protein levels have been below average — a common challenge in high-yielding seasons. Rooney said growers should expect steep discounts for low protein levels in hard wheat varieties, as well as generous premiums for high protein levels.

Early this season, crop pathologists warned conditions were aligned to cause Idaho growers problems with several diseases and pests, including fusarium headblight, stripe rust, barley yellow dwarf virus and wireworms. Rooney believes growers generally avoided major crop damage due to favorable weather conditions and good management, such as using seed treatments and delaying fall planting until after aphid migrations, in the case of barley yellow dwarf.

Rooney said stripe rust caused headaches for growers who planted susceptible varieties this season, even some who sprayed three fungicide applications, but resistant varieties, such as SY Ovation, escaped damage.

Roughly 15 percent through his harvest, Declo grower Mark Darrington said his yields were slightly above average and his test weights were about 61 pounds per bushel on soft white wheat.

"If you planned ahead and put a disease package on when you were planting wheat varieties, you were less subject to rust and in good shape," Darrington said.

Idaho Falls grower Gary Dixon, while preparing to start harvest, was optimistic about full kernels and good yield and quality.

"I think it's going to be one of our better crops," Dixon said.

Inkom grower Bill McNabb, who started cutting July 25, said kernels are plump in his fall grain, but he's worried the heat could stress his spring wheat.

With 10 percent of his harvest complete, American Falls grower Doug Ruff said he's been pleased by his crop, as have other growers in his area. Soda Springs dryland farmer Sid Cellan believes this year's crop will be about average, following a "once-in-a-lifetime" crop last season. He's pleased that hot weather helped him avoid a wireworm problem, forcing the pests deep into the soil.

Grower returns, however, remain in the cellar, with prices out of Meridian at \$4.13 per bushel for hard red winter and \$4.30 for soft white.

According to USDA, the average price for wheat is expected to finish the marketing year at \$3.89 per bushel, down from \$5.90 three years ago.

Kansas State University Extension economist Dan O'Brien explained major growing areas throughout the U.S. and the world have all had bumper crops, and it's projected that for every 100 bushels of wheat raised in the U.S. this season, 49 bushels will be unused at the marketing year's end.

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"Many wheat growers plant seed by the pound, primarily because that's the way they've traditionally done it or because they don't have a good way of knowing the exact number of seeds in a pound of the wheat variety they've purchased," said John Fietsam, Technical Product Lead with WestBred® Wheat.

"But that doesn't mean that this historical approach is accurate or what's best when it comes to maximizing yield and profit potential, which is particularly important in today's challenging economic environment. In fact, more wheat agronomists and university experts are recommending that, in order to achieve more accurate seeding results, growers should base wheat seeding rates on seeds per acre and not only pounds per acre, due to wide variances in the number of seeds that can be in a pound."

To enable growers to better calibrate their air seeders or drills for improved yield potential and efficiency, WestBred® wheat recently introduced the ConnectIN™ Wheat Insight System, which gives wheat seed suppliers the ability to provide growers Optimal Seeding Rate recommendations for the variety they

are purchasing. Optimal Seeding Rate recommendations are based on key factors like seed count per pound, geography, planting date, production practices and the targeted seeds per acre identified for the farm.

"Many wheat growers want to know how many seeds to plant per acre, how many seeds are in a pound of the variety they've purchased and how it all relates to their planting environment," said Fietsam. "The ConnectIN System, by providing Optimal Seeding Rate recommendations, gives growers valuable information in a quick, convenient format that they can easily use for planting."

Fietsam noted that since variations in seed size and density can have a dramatic impact on how many seeds are in a pound, planting based on only pounds per acre can prevent growers from optimizing results.

Although some wheat varieties are capable of compensating somewhat and producing similar grain yields across a fairly wide range of seeding rates, using seeding rates that are too low can lead to reliance on excessive tillering, delayed maturity, increased weed competition and failure to make use of the full yield potential.

Seeding rates that are too high may increase costs, result in increased lodging and possibly reduce yield

potential. Increased competition among plants also can lead to fewer kernels per head and lower kernel weight.

In comparison, planting based on Optimal Seeding Rate recommendations can result in a more targeted plant population that:

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"With Optimal Seeding Rate recommendations, the key benefit is the value being received by the grower," said Fietsam. "We believe we can enhance the way wheat is planted by providing the grower more valuable information about the variety they have purchased and are about to plant."

For more information about the advantages of Optimal Seeding Rates and the ConnectIN Wheat Insight System from WestBred wheat, see your WestBred representative, call (800) 705-2309 or visit ConnectINSystem.com.

