

**KIWIFRUIT NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2010**

EDITORIAL

Kiwi(fruit) Innovation is alive and well, I find that there is always something of interest developing as I visit growers.

I am amazed at the continual process of innovation leading to trials of the many and varied ideas.

In a short period of time I came across the following –
 Trial to promote leader growth –Chemical.
 Trial to promote leader growth –Mechanical.
 Several variations on stringing of canes.
 Orchard designed structures for stringing.
 Different Modes of stringing.
 Pollen collection and delivery systems.
 Pollination machinery for T Bar.
 Sweetening flowers for bees.
 Pest control trials.

So, with innovators and a billion dollar industry why can we not solve the increasing industry fruit loss problem?

While it is accepted, but not talked about, we all know there is under reporting on fruit loss, good for the entities involved but bad for our industry.

What do you think is our true fruit loss? 10% / 15% / 20% ?

Any of the above percentages would be a major driver to innovation that could help reduce fruit loss, we need to come together as an industry on this as it will help all. Under reporting is simply costing most growers dollars.

Bring on an auditable method of measuring Kilograms of fruit into a packhouse - it will put more dollars into growers pockets.

Richard Allen

TRUSTEE REPORT

December's Trustee meeting featured;

- A review of the income payable to the grower pools and the distribution of pool funds.
- The resignation of Robyn Teague as a Trustee. Robyn's regular and vigilant contribution as a Trustee is acknowledged.
- A review of ACL's 2010 packing proposal, which incorporates an option for growers who qualify for Zespri's loyalty payment to pool their entitlement so the impact of fruit loss is shared.

While still subject to confirmation, Zespri's intention to bring forward the loyalty payment on the 2009 crop will be appreciated to help offset the escalating spring and summer orchard costs.

Orchardists have a few new issues to contemplate this year as they react to the impact of climate, pests, crop load, and operating costs and the prospective returns for their crop. The pending release of new varieties under an allocation and cost mechanism that is still to be determined will be of particular interest to green growers. They will be assessing whether conversion to a new variety will be a panacea for the viability of their operation. Will the certainty of incurring increased capital costs and short term crop reduction be offset with possible future increases in net returns?

Growers who delivered a resounding mandate to retain the existing single point of entry system, which evolved from the former fragmented global marketing of our fruit, will watch with concern the corporate contest to this mechanism.

Wyn Daniell

One of the weird and wonderful things we find in our orchard travels. This looks like hormone or Glyphosphate damage but this was one vine only so the Jury is still out.



CICADA FIELD DAY RE-CAP

Just prior to Christmas Zespri ran a series of discussion groups on cicadas and passion-vine hoppers. Dr David Logan (Plant and Food Research Scientist), Shane Max (Zespri Orchard Productivity Manager- Global Supply) and Richard Pentreath (Zespri Orchard Productivity Manager - NZ Supply) ran the informative meetings. I made it along to one of the cicada meetings at Riverside Orchard in Katikati with a number of other ACL staff. Thanks kindly to Glenn Roberts (Orchard Manager) for hosting the meeting.

Here at the packhouse, sooty mould continued to represent a large waste of otherwise good quality fruit at packing 2009. On average, sooty mould losses represented around 1.7% of the total crop submitted, but the more severely affected orchards were losing around 7% of their crop.

I'll highlight some of the interesting points and discussion that came up that were new to our existing knowledge on this pest.

It is possible to differentiate between sooty mould deposited by cicadas versus that of passion vine hopper. Passion vine hopper sooty mould tends to blanket the fruit, particularly around the top where as cicada sooty mould tends to be more of a splatter across the side and seems to be much 'drier' and more difficult to remove. There may be some scope to formally record these differences at packing to help quantify who is the main culprit of sooty mould contributions in your orchard.

PVH



Cicada



Fig 1 Fruit with PVH sooty mould versus cicada sooty mould

Aongatete trialled the use of chlorpyrifos as a ground drench to target cicada nymphs as they emerged in early January on a particularly badly affected orchard. While, visually, the treatment did seem to reduce the population I would not widely recommend this treatment as broad spectrum chemicals such as this will kill all organisms in the soil it comes in contact with, including all the important microbiology we work hard at trying to encourage in the soil environment.

The life cycle and feeding habits of cicadas continue to make it a problematic pest to target with chemicals. Even if contact products such as chlopryrifos were available in the crop protection program, they have little efficacy against pests as tough as cicadas. Systemic insecticides provide too much residue risk to over summer to target the adults as they feed, and lastly, the nymphs only feed on the root xylem which is very difficult to get chemicals into.

One interesting area that may provide some hope is the development of a soil fungal treatment that will infect the nymphs and kill them. With some Research and Development committed, there could be potential to inoculate the soil with the fungus, possibly in some pellet like form.

The other main area that may provide some relief is with the development of improved clean up spray technology. Where sooty mould has been particularly bad in orchards, and especially where it appears to be sooty mould that has come from cicadas, it proves to be almost impossible to budge with the current chemistry.

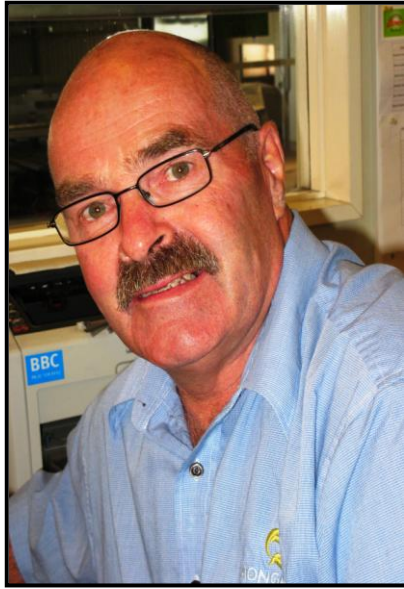
As I'm writing this (Jan 13th), cicadas haven't emerged from the ground in any great numbers but we expect the peace to be disrupted in the very near future. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you experience high populations of cicadas in your orchards over the next few weeks as we're very interested to find any underlying similarities in orchard characteristics that may be common in properties that consistently suffer from this problem.

Jacqueline McCormack
Horticultural Technical Leader



RSE APPLICATION APPROVED

With the approval from NZ Immigration received in December for Aongatete's experienced R.S.E teams to return this year, Clive Exelby begins the recruitment drive for next season, leaving for Vanuatu on 17th January.



Clive expects teams from Vanuatu, Malaysia, Tonga and The Solomon Islands will be part of the seasonal staff required to meet the demand from our growers this season, working alongside our returning Kiwi workers.

We welcome applications from local residents expressing an interest in returning to join us this season. Please phone us on 07 552 0916.



OUR WEBSITE NOW UPDATED

Aongatete has a new website! After a number of comments that our website looked outdated and was difficult to use, we have designed a new site for the company, and are already receiving positive feedback.

This new website provides copies of our newsletter to download, as well as a place for us to advertise the range of products and services that we have to offer.

Feel free to browse our new site, still at www.coolstore.co.nz, and let us know if you have any problems, or if there is anything else you would like to see featured online.



CA 2010

As harvest draws near, we are starting to think about the 2010 Controlled Atmosphere (CA) Storage Programme. As many of you will know, we had a great deal of success with CA in 2009. Those Growers who did place crops in CA generally experienced increased returns over Main Pack crops due to storage payments and packing incentives – a good way to increase returns for your orchard.

A number of changes were implemented last season to improve the performance of our CA Programme, and we are already talking about other changes that can be made in an attempt to minimise loss even more and maximise returns to CA Growers.

Looking back over the past season, it is becoming clear to me that it is more the smaller changes that we made that have paid dividends.

Those changes that we are currently considering making are not big, or flashy, but I feel in the long run will further advance the performance of the 2010 CA Programme.

If you are considering placing some of your crop into CA storage, or just want to know more about CA, please have a talk to your Client Services representative – it makes it much easier for us to select and monitor crops, and have them picked at optimum CA maturity come harvest time.

Not all crops will be suitable for CA, however this can be determined through monitoring, and it is always good to know what your options are for packing your crop.

Christopher Clement.
Technical Support



NEW VARIETIES

Well, with New Varieties on the horizon there are some interesting questions arising.

It is evident that there is a lot of orchardist focus on licensing, but in reality that will probably be the lowest input, especially if you are a Green orchard cutting over to Gold, as you may need shelter, irrigation, frost protection, strings and poles, as some examples of possible input required.

This then raises the question of financing and how to spread the cost.

There would seem to be a number of growing methods available. Zespri has a preference for fast production so top working the vines is first on the list, although this brings in a year with no production and income.

Alternate row cropping could be used to spread the cost by introducing one side at a time and still have some income.

Keeping some, or all, of the existing crop and growing the New Variety in tandem may give a changeover and income, but carries a risk of not working in your favour if not done 100%

No doubt there are other methods orchardists are looking at as well.

Considering that fact that Hort 16A took some three years before there were small positive OGR's there is a lot of orchard and finance planning to take place.

This planning also extends to the Packhouse as we need to look at production variance, extending the packing season, the labour implications for both the field operations and packhouse operations, packaging, segregation and a myriad of other things that happen here.

It is time to start answering some of these questions, or at least start discussions that will no doubt raise questions I have not even considered.

In turn we can then start to plan and answer some of the questions that are on the table now, for some the physical process is very close considering we are probably 8 – 9 weeks out from beginning harvest.

I will be talking to growers as I see them to try and get a feel as to the methods in favour currently, the hurdles that we can help with as a packhouse, and how we can all move forward with this together.

Richard Allen

HOLIDAY TIME AT AONGATETE



Yes, I know we are well out of the Christmas holidays, but did I tell you that the Administration, Client Services and Packhouse team won the ACL Cup in our annual Christmas cricket match!! The opposing team, consisting of staff from Coolstore and Horticultural Departments, were last year's winners, so next year the challenge will be on!!



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