Let’s Talk Current Events & Future Changes

**Melissa Cregan appointed Agricultural Commissioner...**

As most of you probably know already, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer Les Wright retired in January. I was formally appointed as his replacement in March after serving as Interim Commissioner.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide a little background about myself. I grew up in the Chico area of Butte County where my background was primarily with horses and livestock. I earned my B.S. in Animal Science from U.C. Davis. Directly out of college, I started my career in the Ag Commissioner system as an inspector in Madera County in 2001. After about 6 years, I was promoted to the Deputy Commissioner overseeing the pesticide regulatory program. In 2012, I came to Fresno County as the Deputy Commissioner over the Pest Detection and Exclusion Division. At the beginning of 2018, I was promoted to Assistant Agricultural Commissioner.

**Changes in the Horizon Newsletter...**

The Horizon newsletter will continue with a few changes. Most notably, the horizon will go from a monthly publication to quarterly. We will also be broadening the appeal by adding articles that feature some of our programs that affect the public at large. My hope is that the new format will balance the time and resource demands for developing content with our commitment to keep the public and regulated community up to date with what is going on.

**Industrial Hemp...**

Industrial hemp was legalized by the 2018 Farm Bill and the first commercially produced crop is nearing harvest in Fresno County. While this season has been a bumpy one from a regulatory perspective, hopefully that aspect will get smoothed out with the passage of the federal guidelines this fall.

**Cherry Crop Loss...**

The series of storms that occurred in mid to late May cause substantial losses in the cherry crop up and down the state. Locally in Fresno County there was a 65% reduction in production valued at approximately $25 million.

**Chlorpyrifos Update...**

The Governor has directed CalEPA, through the Department of Pesticide Regulation, to start the process to cancel the registration of all pesticide products containing chlorpyrifos. This comes after the Department released strict permit conditions that were implemented statewide last January. The cancelation process is expected to take about two years and the strict use conditions will remain in effect during that time. The Governor’s May Revision budget proposal included $5.7 million in funding for additional research and technical assistance to develop alternatives to chlorpyrifos.

**Pesticide Drifts...**

Finally I want to address the recent pesticide drift incidents that have been reported in the news. The recent incident in Fresno County was preventable. Some common sense tips include: prior to making a pesticide application, look around. Is your application next to a crop that is nearing harvest or a time when you should expect workers to be in the field? Talk to your neighbors; ask if they are planning to have workers in adjacent fields prior to making pesticide applications. If you do not know your neighbor, call my office and we can help you make contact.

Do the weather conditions at the time of application favor the material moving off site? Will your application use an airblast sprayer? Is the pesticide in the form of a dust; or does the material have a strong odor? Scout the field prior to and supervise during the application. Carefully monitor applications made to fields where workers are downwind. Lastly, in some cases that we investigate that involve drift, an employee admits feeling pressure to get the application completed. Impress upon your employees your commitment to safety. Train them to be vigilant of their surroundings and anticipate potential hazards. Give them permission to stop an application if they identify a hazard. It seems like common sense, however many workers are fearful they will get in trouble if they speak up or take the initiative. Encourage and reward a safety culture, as they are your best line of defense.
Californians love their citrus. Whether it be fresh, squeezed, used for cooking/baking or in tea ... oranges, tangerines, lemons, grapefruit, tangelos and others are so good and have so many uses. What would we do without them?

Did you know- there is a deadly citrus disease known as 

**huanglongbing (HLB)** in California? HLB is a bacteria that infects citrus trees. It causes the fruit to become small, asymmetrical, bitter and inedible. There is currently no cure for the disease and infected trees will eventually die.

This disease is transmitted by the pest pictured above called the **Asian citrus psyllid (ACP)**. The ACP is a small insect that feeds on citrus trees. When it feeds on an infected tree and moves to a non-infected tree, the HLB disease can be transmitted. Unfortunately, the ACP is also present in California and has been detected in Fresno County.

The good news is- the HLB disease is isolated to southern California in the vicinity of Los Angeles, Anaheim, and Riverside. This is the HLB quarantine area. There is a mountain range between this area and the valley. In order for the HLB disease to get into the valley and Fresno County, an infected citrus tree or part would have to be removed from the quarantine area and transported here; or an infected ACP would have to be transported here. Grafting from an HLB infected citrus tree to a non-infected tree would also spread the disease.

As you can imagine, this pest and disease would be devastating to your backyard citrus trees and the citrus industry in Fresno County. Movement of citrus trees and parts is regulated. The County of Fresno Department of Agriculture’s staff places ACP traps in citrus trees throughout the county. Cooperation with requests to place a trap in your citrus tree allows for detection of the ACP.

Curry leaf is also a host of the HLB disease. Restrictions apply to the movement of this plant material as well.

If you suspect your citrus tree might be infected with HLB or infested with ACP, contact the California Department of Food and Agriculture at **1-800-491-1899**; or the County of Fresno Department of Agriculture at **559-600-7510**.

**Export News:**

In the second quarter, Fresno County staff certified 3528 shipments consisting of 47 different commodities to 70 different countries. The top exported commodities for the quarter included almonds, oranges, peaches, raisins, and nectarines. The top 5 destination countries were Canada, Japan, Taiwan, China and Korea.
Stay Safe This Summer While Enjoying Your Pool or Spa...

⇒ Remember... do not put too much chlorine in your pool. Chlorine, whether in solid or liquid formulation, have labels that are both state and federally approved to ensure safety; and their directions for use must be followed. Chlorine is a pesticide used in swimming pools to destroy bacteria and other harmful organisms that are capable of causing human illnesses. Excessive exposure to chlorine can cause sickness and injuries including rashes, coughing, nose and throat pain, eye irritation/itchiness, and trigger asthma symptoms. Chlorine gas is poisonous, flammable and corrosive.

When using chlorine products, do NOT:

- Breathe in chlorine fumes, consume or ingest, touch with your bare hands, mix with any other chemicals, or mix different formulations of chlorine together.

When storing chlorine products, do NOT:

- Store within reach of children, allow access by pets, place near combustible products or near an open flame, or remove chlorine from its original container for storage.

⇒ Remember... to keep the California Poison Control number handy (1-800-222-1222).

⇒ Follow... proper fire safety and prevention guidelines.

These tips apply to all household chemicals.
Always Follow Label directions for safe handling and storage.
Weights & Measures staff provide consumer protection by verifying...

- Scales used at supermarket checkout stands, at the post office, in deli’s, and any other location where consumers purchase items based on weight are weighing correctly.
- Packaged commodities hold the amount stated on the label.
- Gasoline pumps are pumping the correct amount of gas as stated at the pump.
- Taxi meters are accurately calculating the correct fare.
- Propane truck meters are delivering the correct amount of gas.
- Recycling center scales have been properly approved, tested, and sealed.

What is CRV?
Consumers pay CRV (California Refund Value) when they purchase beverages from a retailer and are reimbursed the CRV when they redeem the beverage container at a recycling center. The minimum refund value established for each type of eligible beverage container is 5 cents for each container under 24 ounces and 10 cents for each container 24 ounces or greater.
Spotted knapweed (Centaurea maculosa):
Spotted knapweed, an "A-rated" pest, is a biennial or short-lived perennial weed of very limited distribution in eastern Fresno County. It has been detected in the Sierra Mountain range in the eastern portion of Fresno County. Spotted knapweed grows and spreads very rapidly in disturbed areas. There are some indications that it releases chemical substances that inhibit the growth of adjacent plants. Spotted knapweed can reach 1 to 3 feet tall. It has solitary flower heads at the end of branches. The pinkish-purple flower heads have stiff bracts at the base with a dark comb like fringe giving it a spotted appearance. Flowering occurs June to October.

Spotted knapweed was introduced from Eurasia. It was detected in Fresno County on August 1, 1986, along Highway 168, east of the Big Creek turnoff at an elevation of approximately 6,000 feet. The infestation was treated and subsequent surveys were negative. On August 7, 2001, spotted knapweed was detected by U.S. Forest Service (USFS) personnel on Dinkey Creek Road east of Glen Meadow at an elevation of approximately 6,000 feet. Five adult plants in full bloom were hand pulled. Surveys since 2001 have been negative. The latest find was on August 22, 2005. The infestation site was approximately 1/2 acre at an elevation of 5,664 feet. All stages of growth were present. On August 23, blooming plants were hand pulled. The remaining rosettes were treated. Follow-up surveys in 2006 and 2007 found single flowering plants, which were hand pulled. Subsequent surveys in 2008 through 2014 were negative. However, in 2015 there was a positive find in the same area.

Spotted knapweed grows and spreads very rapidly in disturbed areas. Once established spotted knapweed produces a very stout, and deep taproot and becomes much difficult to control. Spotted knapweed has the potential to become the yellow starthistle of the high Sierra’s. Native vegetation, and associated wildlife, would be negatively impacted. Timber harvest activities would be delayed or curtailed entirely. Infestations of meadows and grazing areas would have a negative impact on the cattle industry. Due to the limited distribution of spotted knapweed early detection and treatment is critical.

Survey of the original infestation site for spotted knapweed will begin the last week of July in the Shaver Lake area.

Rush skeletonweed (Chondrilla juncea), purple starthistle (Centaurea calcitrapa), perennial pepperweed (Lepidium latifolium) and hoary cress (Cardaria spp) survey and treatment update: There was no survey or treatment activity due to the lack of funding.

Water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) survey update: No activity.
**Vertebrate Control Tips:**

The young ground squirrels have been out and are very active throughout the County. Pre-baiting with clean oat groats is not only important, but mandated by label, in determining bait acceptance. Once grain acceptance is established treatment with appropriate rodenticides can begin. Remember to treat only active burrows. Be aware that as the hotter days get established some of the ground squirrels will go in to aestivation (summer sleep). It may give the appearance that your control program was successful very fast. However, the squirrels will reappear in September. The control methods may not have been faulty, just a little late. Be alert.

The normal hours for the bait sales counter are 8:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm. Monday through Friday. For questions concerning vertebrate damage management call 600-1909/600-7510.

**Monthly Crop Report:** To view the May report, press HERE.