

Tulare County Ag News

February 26, 2016

Volume 1, Issue 1

A Note from the Commissioner



Inside this issue:

Commissioner	1
In the News	2
Pesticide Use Enforcement	3
Standards & Quarantine	5
Weights & Measures	7
World Ag Expo	8
Crop Report	9
Upcoming Events	11

Welcome to our inaugural Quarterly Newsletter. It is our intent to provide valuable information about the services the department offers, as well as additional information that directly relates to the agricultural industry we serve. The residents of Tulare County should be proud of the fact that, for the second year in a row, our growers and producers maintained the status of having the highest agricultural production value in the nation, at almost \$8.1 billion. Our local economy depends on the fact that a significant portion of the U.S. grown fruits, nuts, honey and dairy products are produced right in our back yard. Agriculture is the largest private employer in Tulare County, with farm employment accounting for a quarter of all jobs.



With the heavy weight of responsibility to provide a level playing field for all, I see my department's role to promote and protect that agricultural industry and related businesses, the environment, and the public is through regulatory enforcement.

My department works cooperatively with several Federal and State agencies to implement regulatory programs at the local level. Many of these actions involve keeping noxious weeds from spreading, or limiting the impact of insect and disease pests. We also enforce ordinances which are specific to Tulare County and adhere to other county restrictions as well.

Our county has the proud distinction of being the #1 exporting county in the nation. Our licensed staff supports federal efforts to facilitate agricultural trade by doing approximately 60,000 inspections annually and providing shippers with the appropriate phytosanitary documentation necessary to move commodities to other states and over 80 countries. Providing our trading partners with negative trap data from our exotic pest detection program gives reassurances that our products are safe to ship anywhere. Our Pest Detection program maintains approximately 11,408 traps to protect our specialty crops against the introduction of injurious plant and animal pests.

Pesticides are a necessary tool in any grower's integrated pest management plan. As mandated by law, I am to assure the protection of people and the environment from the impacts of pesticide use and protect businesses and consumers through consistent and dedicated enforcement of agricultural laws and regulations.

Continued on page 2

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A Note from the Commissioner

Continued from page 1

2016 will hold many new and existing challenges for our agricultural industry. I hope that you find our quarterly newsletter informative and a useful resource. The newsletter will be circulated through our website, as well as through industry networks. Individuals may request to be added to our email group by visiting our website at <http://agcomm.co.tulare.ca.us/> or you may contact our main office at 559-684-3350.

In The News

Say it Out Loud!



You might be surprised by the influence you can have communicating your connection to agriculture or educating people about the importance of agriculture to our local economy. With the worldwide obsession with social media, setting up Facebook pages and Twitter accounts are easy ways to providing farm facts while promoting your operation. Several of our farms are highlighted on California Tour websites where foodie-types can go to plan a week's worth of meals. One can go online to get instructions on fixing a Whirlpool dishwasher, so why not provide short videos on your walnut harvesting operation. I guarantee that there are folks who have never considered how you harvest the nuts from the top of a sixty foot tree. With any commodity, these videos offer simply opportunities at the click of a button, yet have a great impression on those who follow you. The use of technology and social media has taken the opportunity to share agriculture to a whole new level and give urban residents a glimpse into a Tulare County farmer's life.

The Tulare County Ag Commissioner's office has new fax numbers:

New Admin Fax number (includes W&M): (559)713-3768 (old number 685-3335)

New Pesticide Use Enforcement number: (559)713-3770 (old number 685-3336)

New Standards & Exclusion number: (559)713-3769 (old number 685-3350)



Pesticide Use Enforcement Division

NOTICE

To: Aerial Pest Control Operators & Pesticide Dealers

RE: **NOTICE OF CUT-OFF DATE FOR CERTAIN HERBICIDES APPLIED BY AIR**

Per Title 3 California Code of Regulations section 6464:

The use of RESTRICTED phenoxy herbicides [2,4-D, 2,4-DB, 2,4-DP, MCPA,] and the herbicides Dicamba (Banvel, Yukon, Clarity) and propanil are prohibited by aerial application after 1:00 a.m. PST, **Monday Morning, February 29, 2016.**

Waivers to this prohibition may be granted on an individual basis. Requests for waivers must be in writing and accompanied by a written recommendation stating *"No crops sensitive to damage are within 1 mile of the proposed treatment area"*. No waivers will be granted after March 15.

February 29, 2016 through October 15, 2016:

No application, **Ground or Air**, of RESTRICTED phenoxy herbicides [2,4-D, 2,4-DB, 2,4-DP, MCPA,] shall be made on any area situated within two miles of any cultivated commercial vineyard or cotton planting belonging to any other person other than the owner of the property being treated unless there is a continuous air flow away from such planting, but in no case shall any application be made within one-half mile of such planting.

In Tulare County, crops that are considered to be sensitive to damage from these herbicides include, but are not limited to, **COTTON, SUGAR BEETS, TOMATOES, and GRAPEVINES or DECIDUOUS TREE FRUIT** with evidence of bud break. Also considered to be sensitive to damage is **NEWLY PLANTED ALFALFA.**

If you have any questions, please contact our pesticide department at (559) 684-3352.

Is Your Landscaper or Gardener Licensed... and Are They Registered with The Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office?

The Pesticide Use Enforcement Division ensures that individuals selling, possessing, handling, applying and recommending the use of pesticides are knowledgeable in their safe use. The Department of Pesticide Regulation's Licensing of pesticide professionals is designed to ensure they have the knowledge and ability to use pesticides safely and effectively.



In addition, Pest Control Advisers, Aircraft Pilots, and Agricultural and Structural Pest Control Businesses must register with The Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's office annually before work is conducted in Tulare County.

Most people associate pesticides with agriculture. However, homeowners are sometimes surprised to learn that their "mow and blow" gardener or landscape maintenance company may be directly applying pesticides containing some powerful chemistry to their lawns.

Besides posing a significant risk to children and pets if used incorrectly, traces of pesticides used on lawns and gardens may run off the soil and enter local rivers, streams and wetlands via storm drains. This may impact our ground water supply and also affect aquatic life miles away from the homeowner.

A licensed Maintenance Gardener is competent to safely apply pesticides only when needed and to avoid risks to human health and the environment. Even if you have a small lawn, with a small amount of pesticides, when combined with other homes and businesses, you could be adversely affecting a significant amount of aquatic life.

A state license, from The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), ensures that the person applying pesticides has been properly trained to use them in outdoor garden areas.

Verify that your Maintenance Gardener is licensed by DPR and registered with Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's office if they use pesticides. Gardeners with proper training are more likely to use safer methods to better protect your family and the environment. The Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner believes that the safe use of pesticides is everyone's responsibility and we can all work together to protect our environment.



Standards and Quarantine Division

Keeping Control on Asian citrus psyllid



Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) continues to be found in small numbers in Tulare County with no established populations being found in commercial citrus groves. Tulare County became fully quarantined in September 2014.

ACP county-wide quarantines continue in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties, with portions of Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Madera, San Benito, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Clara counties also under quarantine.

The quarantine prohibits the movement of citrus and curry tree nursery stock out of the quarantine areas and requires that all bulk citrus be cleaned. Residents with backyard citrus trees in the quarantine area are asked not to transport citrus fruit or leaves, potted citrus trees, or curry leaves from the quarantine area.

For more information about the ACP and quarantines within California please visit:

<http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/plant/acp/index.html>

If you are a grower, certified producer, harvester, shipper, or packer located within any of the quarantine areas you will need to contact the CDFA ACP Project to obtain a compliance agreement.

The phone number for the ACP Project is (559) 636-7410.

The ACP is an invasive species of grave concern because it can carry the disease huanglongbing (HLB), also known as citrus greening. All citrus and closely related species, such as curry leaf trees, are susceptible hosts for both the insect and disease. There is no cure once the tree becomes infected, the diseased tree will decline in health and produce bitter, misshaped fruit until it dies.

Vertebrate Management Bait Sales

Currently bait sales are slow, with the much needed rain keeping rodent activity to a minimum. At this time we are selling mostly gas cartridges. Moist soil helps to keep the gas trapped in the burrow, thus making it more efficient. Sales of Diphacinone .005 for bait stations are also being used to help keep populations from getting out of hand.

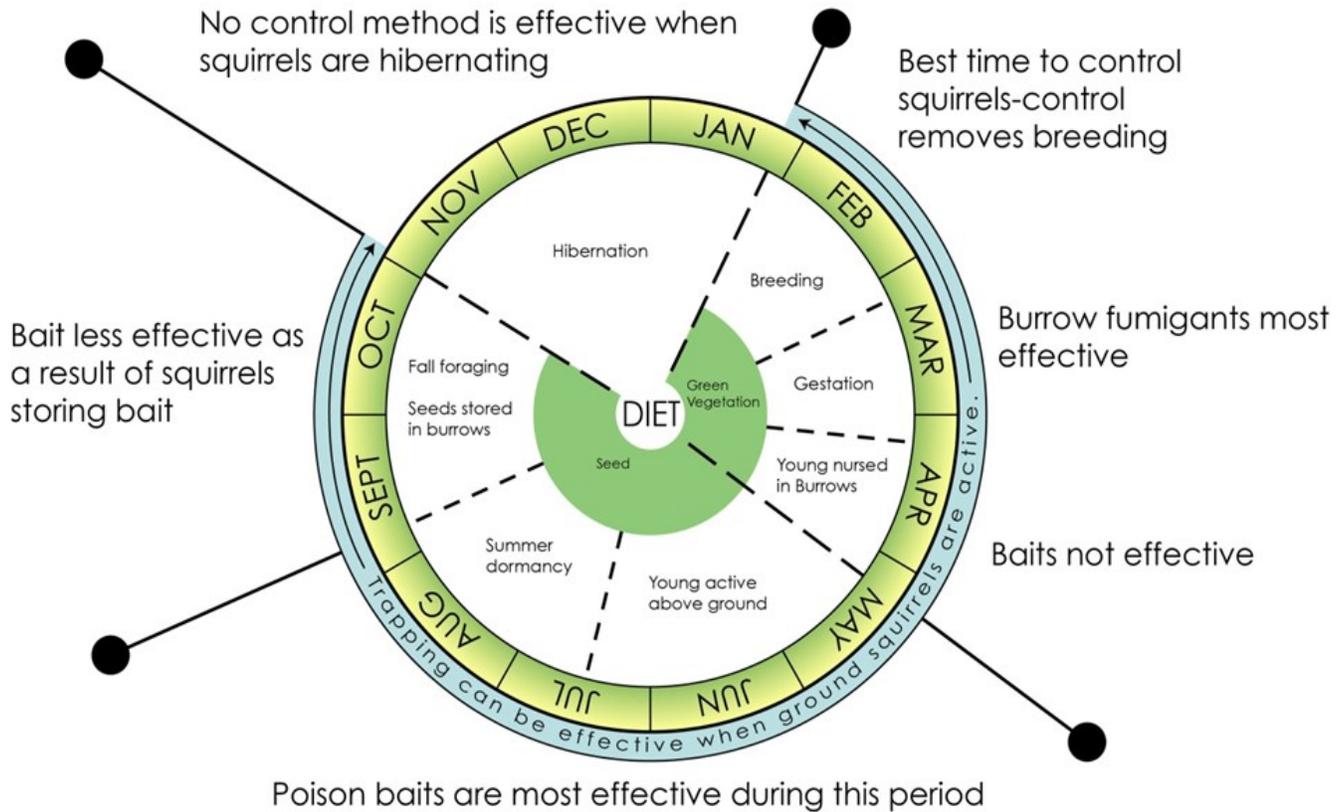
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Vertebrate Management Bait Sales

Continued from page 5

California Ground Squirrel - Calendar of Management



Calendar dates are merely an estimation of time; actual time frames may vary according to the weather.

***Always make sure to read all pesticide labels.**

Graphic used with permission from the University of California Ground Squirrel Best Management Practices Website:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/Ground_Squirrel_BMP/

Plow-down – An Integral Pest Management Success Story

This year's compliance with the Cotton Plow-down Regulations was excellent, with all growers meeting the December 20, 2015, deadline for having their fields shredded and disked.

In order to comply with the regulations a grower must first shred the cotton stalks so that they can be readily mixed with the soil surface and enhance breakdown during the winter weather. Shredding also damages approximately 95% of any pink bollworm that might be overwintering on the plant or at the base. The grower is then required to disk and uproot the remaining stalks to kill the plant and prevent regrowth during the host-free period. Finally, no cotton may be planted prior to March 10, 2016, in order to maintain the 90 day host-free period.



As a result of the program pink bollworm numbers in the San Joaquin Valley have been reduced to near zero, and greatly impacted the need to spray for this destructive pest of cotton.

Weights and Measures Division

Spring Testing Time

by Deputy Sealer, David Case



Every device used to sell commodities by weight or volume is required to be tested, and therefore sealed. We test commercial devices using a standard. Standards come in different sizes and types. Typical weights come in one-half to one pound increments and provers are one and five gallon measurements. In some cases our standards are as large as the vehicles we drive, such as our livestock truck and our weight truck, which carries our 1,000 pound weight standards. If, for some reason, the device does not meet the requirements we issue either a yellow or red tag to tag it out of compliance. A yellow tag is issued when the device is in favor of the consumer and a red tag is issued when the device is in favor of the retailer. In either case, the device must be repaired or removed from service.

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Spring Testing Time

Continued from page 7

As we move from winter to spring, we shift from testing devices which measure liquefied petroleum gases (propane) to testing livestock scales. We test these scales using our rolling standard livestock truck. As long as animal scales are maintained and the area underneath is kept clean, these scales will normally pass inspection. I have heard stories about standing water, wooden branches and rattlesnakes. Most of these types of scales are in the foothills. The cleaner these vacant spaces are the better chance of testing and sealing your livestock scale without having to tag it out of compliance.



Another type of device we usually test this time of year is the retail motor fuel pump. We test each grade at least once per year. While we are at these gasoline stations, we conduct a petroleum inspection. This involves comparing signage on the pump, information found on the roadside sign, and the underground fill tanks. A violation occurs when there is not consistency amongst all three, with regard to prices, grades, product and brand. Accurate signs help the consumer to make an informed decision while comparing gasoline prices at various stations.

As a reminder, the first week in March is Weights and Measures week. All across the nation, Weights and Measures officials demonstrate how their daily duties translate into equity in the market place, protecting both the consumer and the business owner, year around.

Our Booth at the World Ag Expo

by Marilyn Kinoshita

As a regulatory department in local government, our office performs many mandated functions and enforces numerous laws and regulations. We displayed several items and informational material regarding these programs at our booth during the Farm Show. Public cooperation with programs, such as our exotic pest detection and exclusion, is vital to having successful outcomes and a good reason to advocate for our causes. Our staff had thousands of opportunities to interface with people who are curious about everything from our insect display cases to pest detection traps. It was a perfect opportunity to share information.



Continued on next page

Our Booth at the World Ag Expo

Continued from page 8



Soya and her handlers also joined us at our booth. Soya, a black Labrador, is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) plant detection dog, assigned to the Fresno Department of Ag. Her training started with ten weeks of training on five fruit scents at the USDA training facility in Georgia. Now she recognizes roughly 15 different scents and has the ability to walk and work on moving belts in parcel facilities. She must maintain her focus on the packages and not the people, trucks, or noises that surround her. Soya works for treats when she hits on a suspect package. Because Soya is a USDA asset, she is boarded at a kennel and is not considered to be a pet.

To maintain her specialized skills, Soya receives monthly and quarterly trainings and certifications here in California. After one year on the job as an illegal plant material detection dog, she will be tested again and certified to work at the United States Postal Service centers, in addition to her duties at various parcel facilities. Soya started her life as a rescue dog, proving that great accomplishments can be made from humble beginnings.



Crop Report

It is time to gather statistics for the 2015 Annual Crop Report

What is the crop report?

Agricultural Commissioners are required by state law to produce a report of the condition, acreage, production and value of agricultural products produced in the county. If you wish to view past crop reports, please visit our website at <http://agcomm.co.tulare.ca.us> where you may view or download a copy. California is the only state that generates statistics by county, which are more precise and unique than other government and industry group reports. This is because of the great agricultural diversity that exists within the state.



Continued on next page

It is time to gather statistics for the 2015 Annual Crop Report

Continued from page 9

Is the information provided confidential?

We are required by both state and federal law to maintain confidentiality of information obtained from individuals and companies who participate in the survey, including the responder's names and addresses, and actual reported data. However, anonymous data is difficult to use. We may need to ask follow-up questions to clarify unique crop information or situations. These can range from unusual weather-related issues to special crop handling that may have led to extreme highs or lows in crop values reported. These special conditions need to be taken into account when examining the value of the entire crop. So follow up questions may help us make a more accurate report. Again, such information is confidential.

Who uses the crop report?

County crop report data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities – federal, state and local governments, agribusiness, trade associations and many others.

- Lenders use it for cropping trends and potential capital need for the different crops in the area.
- Research and educational agencies use the information for historical baselines of what is being grown and produced.
- The Farm Service Agency (FSA) uses the information for weighted averages for the impacted crop during disaster relief programs.
- Farmers and ranchers can use it to help make informed decisions about the future of their own operations.
- Community planners use the information to target needed services to rural residents.
- Legislators use them when shaping farm policies and programs
- Other companies and labor offices use the report to plan for the upcoming year in regards to harvesting, processing, pricing, transportation and credit needs.

Why participate in the crop report survey?

Input from growers and packing facilities is essential in reporting an accurate picture of the county for all stakeholders. This includes both small and larger operations as well as specialty crops. Many counties in California have agricultural incomes that are equal to or exceed entire states and even foreign countries. This reaffirms the importance of maintaining and improving measurement and reporting of information for the Tulare County Crop and Livestock Report.

Why have I been asked for this information more than once?

Other agencies, local, state, and federal governments may request this type of information as well but they do not share information with us and have a sampling system that is not as statistically reliable at a county level, and many compile data for several years together such as the Census of Agriculture. If the request was indeed from our office, we apologize for the redundancy and hope that you understand we have implemented the use of several databases and methods for collecting information every year.

Upcoming Events

USDA Japan/Korea Cherry Systems Approach for PCA's

March 8, 2016, 9:00 a.m.

Tulare County Ag Auditorium

located at: 4437 S Laspina Street, Tulare, CA 93274



*The Tulare County Ag Commissioner's office
contact information:*

<http://agcomm.co.tulare.ca.us/>

Main office phone number: 559-684-3350

<https://www.facebook.com/TulareAgComm>