

Press Release

City of Downey

State issues emergency proclamation for Citrus tree pest. Localized spraying will occur in hopes of avoiding disaster

Downey, Ca July 30, 2010 - On Tuesday July 27th the City received word from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) that a citrus tree spraying project would commence in the Downey area in early August. The CDFA has identified the problem as an Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP). The ACP is an aphid-like insect about 1/8" long. The ACP is a serious exotic insect pest that transmits a disease known as huanglongbing (HLB) to citrus trees. Citrus trees infected with the HLB disease will die within a year or two. Emergency action is needed to protect local citrus trees and the California citrus industry. Without action, the disease has the potential of devastating the California citrus tree industry.

A map provided by the CDFA shows the majority of the pest detections have been in the East LA area. However, there have been a few pests detected in the western areas of Downey. A program boundary area established by the CDFA identifies the Downey area included in the project area as:

- west of Lakewood Blvd from south City limits to the 5 freeway
- all Downey areas north of the 5 freeway.

The best treatment for the pest infestation is an application of insecticides by the CDFA staff to the foliage of the tree and the soil below the tree. The CDFA reports this 'direct' type of spraying will take 10-15 minutes per tree. All citrus trees within a 400-800 meter radius of a pest detection site will be treated.

Residents of properties scheduled for treatment will be notified in person and / or writing at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled treatment. Following the treatment, completion notices will be left that detail the precautions to take and the post-harvest intervals applicable to any citrus fruit on the property. Delimiting traps for the pests will be set in areas around each detection zone to identify any spread of the pests. Residents should not transport fruit trees out of the effected areas as they could be carrying ACPs and moving the trees could add to the problem.

The CDFA will 'work-around' residents schedules to ensure the spraying efforts are carried out effectively and conveniently. Although the CDFA has not made the spraying mandatory, residents are urged to consider the impacts of the problem if it is allowed to go unchecked. Essentially, most homeowners like their backyard citrus fruits and all citrus trees are at risk unless they are treated.

The signs of ACP problems are:

- ACPs infesting a leaf
- ACP eggs tucked inside new citrus growth
- burned tips of leaves
- twisting of new leaves

If any of the above signs of ACPs are detected on an orange, grapefruit, tangerine, lemon or lime (highest incidence of ACP infestations) tree, residents are encouraged to report their findings to the CDFA at 1-800-491-1899. More information on this issue is available at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/acp/> and by calling a toll-free number 1-800-491-1899. The CDFA is working on this problem with the Los Angeles County Agricultural Commission Office.