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USDA and CDFA Declare California Free of Invasive Fruit Flies

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Press Release

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LOS ANGELES, August 27, 2024 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and the California Department

of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) in collaboration with County Agricultural Commissioners, are proud to announce that after a year of hard work we have eradicated all populations of invasive fruit flies from California. This significant achievement is a testament to the hard work of our agencies and the critical support from the public.

“Invasive fruit flies are among the most destructive and costly pests globally, threatening more than 400 species of fruits and vegetables, including many of California’s most valuable crops such as oranges, grapes, mangoes, blueberries, and tomatoes,” said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny L. Moffitt. “The eradication of these pests marks a major victory for California’s agricultural economy,” said Under Secretary Moffitt.

The joint eradication effort addressed infestations from five introduced species: Oriental (*Bactrocera dorsalis*), Tau (*Zeugodacus tau*), Queensland (*Bactrocera tryoni*), Mexican (*Anastrepha ludens*) and Mediterranean (*Ceratitis capitata*) fruit flies. With their successful eradication, quarantines have been lifted across Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernadino, Santa Clara, San Diego, Riverside, and Ventura Counties, freeing thousands of acres of commercial agriculture from restrictions.

The 2023 invasive fruit fly outbreak was unprecedented, marking the worst of its kind in CDFA’s 100-year history. The outbreak included first-ever quarantines for Tau and Queensland fruit flies in the United States and Western Hemisphere. In response, USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack allocated \$103.5 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation to APHIS, enabling swift and effective action against the outbreak.

APHIS deployed hundreds of employees to join forces with CDFA and the agricultural commissioners for trapping, fruit removal, and survey activities. The team leveraged advanced eradication techniques, including the release of sterile Mediterranean and Mexican fruit flies to disrupt the reproduction of these invasive species. The cooperative effort also included the application of an organic treatment called Spinosad and the development of new regulatory treatments, allowing the safe shipment of commercial citrus out of quarantined areas.

CDFA Secretary Karen Ross emphasized the importance of public cooperation in these efforts. “We are proud of what we have accomplished with the help of

California residents. Your support was vital to eradicating these pests and remains essential in protecting our food supply and natural resources from future invasive threats,” said Ross.

Secretary Ross also outlined steps that the public can take to help prevent future infestations:

1. Declare agricultural products, including fruits or vegetables, to [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) officials when returning from overseas.
2. Familiarize yourself with local quarantines via the [CDFA website](#) and avoid moving or mailing homegrown fruit within or from quarantine areas.
3. Contact the [USDA State Plant Health Director](#) about the legal requirements before [shipping agricultural goods](#) interstate or from overseas. Receiving agricultural goods from foreign sources can spread invasive pests.
4. Allow agricultural officials access to your property for fruit fly trap servicing, pest detection, or to remove fruit when necessary.
5. Avoid composting fruit or vegetables within quarantine areas.
6. Report suspicious pests such as maggots inside of your fruit to your local county agricultural commissioner’s office or to CDFA’s pest hotline at 1-800-491-1899. Please alert either office if a fruit fly trap on your property has been damaged or moved.

For online reporting, visit www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/reportapest/ or email reportapest@cdfa.ca.gov. You may also contact [your local county agricultural commissioner’s office](#).

“We are deeply grateful for the public’s continued vigilance in keeping California free from invasive species. Together, we have turned one of our greatest challenges into a triumph,” said Secretary Ross.

For more information on invasive insects or plant diseases, visit HungryPests.com.