SOILLESS AUSTRALIA

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FRONT COVER

PCA members Marcus and Anthony Brandsema have had to dump thier precious cherry tomto harvest at a loss of $6,000+ per day when the Queensland Fruit Fly was detected close by in Northern Tasmania.

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Adult Queensland Fruit Fly

Queensland Fruit Fly larvae

Fruit Fly larvae in fruit flesh

Biosecurity Alert

Queensland Fruit Fly Restricts Tasmania's Market Access

At the time of going to print, the situation was getting worse every day in Tasmania.

PCA members, Marcus and Anthony Brandsema have unfortunately been caught up with the Queensland Fruit Fly outbreak in the Spreyton region of Tasmania, with devastating effect.

PCA empathises with all the growers affected, and send strong support for a quick action to rectify the situation.

This is a timely reminder of how fragile our produce is, in outbreaks of destructive diseases, and how quickly our market access can change.

Many lessons are being learned in Tasmania, including boosting Biosecurity Tasmania. *"We always need to be assessing our processes to ascertain if we are prepared for the worst and have our action plans in place"* says Nicky Mann, PCA Chair.

About Fruit Flies

Fruit flies cause enormous damage to fruit and some vegetable crops around the world.

They are unlikely to cause the same damage in Tasmania, but their presence at low levels may impede export trade. It is important for our horticultural industries that we keep fruit fly out of the state.

There are around 14 species of fruit fly of potential economic concern on the Australian mainland. The two that pose the most risk to Tasmania are:

- The Queensland fruit fly along the eastern seaboard and in the Northern Territory
- The Mediterranean fruit fly in Western Australia.

IMAGE: This map to the right shows the Exclusion Zone with restricted market access for produce, because of the Queensland Fruit Fly.

The area also covers the The 'Spirit of Tasmania' freight terminal connecting Tasmania and Melbourne, on the Australian mainland.

What is Queensland Fruit Fly?

A mature fruit fly is around 7 mm long and is reddish brown with some yellow markings (see image above).

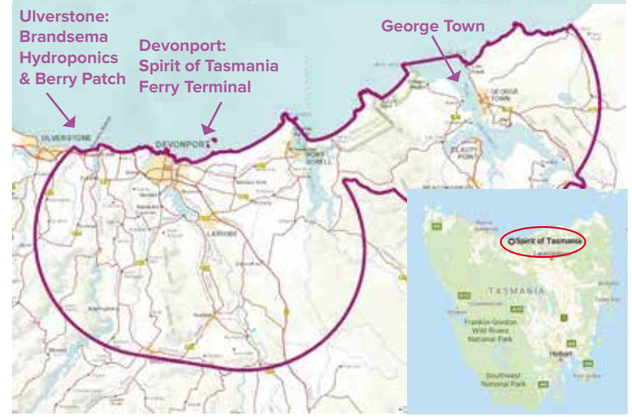
You are more likely to see fruit fly maggots (larvae) than actual flies. Fruit fly larvae look like blowfly maggots. Mature fruit fly larvae are 8-11 mm in length and 1.2-1.5 mm in width. They are usually easy to see in the flesh of the fruit.

A key sign of fruit fly is a series of "stings" visible on the outside of the fruit. A "sting" is a puncture mark caused when a female adult lays eggs into the fruit.

If you open up the "sting" carefully with a sharp knife, you should see a cavity containing eggs or the debris of hatched eggs - you would probably need a magnifying glass to see it.

The number of maggots (larvae) in a single piece of fruit varies from as little as 1 to more than 60, however typically we would expect to find 4-20 maggots in each piece of infected fruit.

Fruit Fly Control Area Northern Tasmania Feb 20 2018



Keeping Tasmania Fruit Fly free

Tasmania's fruit fly free status is recognised by key overseas countries. This status give Tasmanian exporters competitive advantage in key markets such as Japan, Korea, USA, Taiwan and China.

For many years, the belief has been that fruit fly would not survive a Tasmanian winter.

However, even a temporary summer population of the pest can disrupt fruit exports. Any degree of trade disruption by the possible loss of preferential fruit fly area freedom, is undesirable for growers.

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Biosecurity Alert continued

Staff at Brandsema Hydroponics have had to dump perfect cherry tomatoes because they are inside the Fruit Fly Exclusions zone. Screenshot from ABC video on YouTube by Cordell Richardson

The Cost of Fruit Fly

The cost of fruit fly to producers where it exists on the mainland is substantial. That cost includes:

- Loss of product due to infestation
- Restricted market access for product from within the biosecurity area (typically 15 km radius of an infested property)
- Costs of an eradication program (typically baiting)
- Costs of ongoing insecticide use
- The loss of any market premium that goes with post-harvest fumigation of exported fruit.

It is estimated that Tasmania's fruit fly free status adds tens of millions of dollars a year to the export income earned by Tasmanian horticultural industries.

Fruit Fly Spread in Tasmania

Biosecurity Officers are now visiting local markets to check out what is being sold.

They have found fruit fly infected produce in Wynyard (apricots) and 5 kilos of produce were seized from a passenger flying in from Flinders island early in February.

Tasmanians have expressed their anger at such "selfish" behaviour on behalf of stall holders and travellers.

Fruits that could be stung by fruit fly are tomato, capsicum, raspberry, strawberry, blackberry, mulberry, cherry, fig, apple, apricot, lemon, loganberry, nashi, nectarine, passionfruit, peach, pear, plum, quince.

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