

FRUIT FLY AND WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR SEPTEMBER 2018 – GOULBURN MURRAY VALLEY

The weather outlook for the Goulburn Murray Valley in September 2018

The Bureau of Meteorology weather outlook for next month forecasts less rainfall and higher temperatures than usual for the GMV.

The usual rainfall in this area for September is between 25mm and 50mm. There is only a 20% to 30% chance that more rain than this will fall next month.

The usual maximum temperature in September for the GMV is 15°C to 18°C but the chance of exceeding these next month is very high at 75%. The median minimum temperatures are between 3°C and 6°C but the likelihood of exceeding them next month are quite high at 65% to 70%.

Fruit flies trapped in the GMV during late August 2018

Only 4 male fruit flies were trapped on the GMV trapping grid during mid to late August 2018. There were two flies trapped in the urban part of Tatura, one in Orrvale and one in the urban part of Kyabram. We're hoping that this is due to very few adult fruit flies surviving the winter but it is too early to be certain.

What does this all mean for fruit flies in the GMV?

Lack of rainfall will impact adversely on fruit fly survival both as overwintering adults and as larvae in fruit as water scarcity makes it difficult for adults to survive as well as feral and volunteer fruiting plants to produce enough fruit to allow for fruit fly infestation. However, the rising temperatures are beneficial to fruit fly survival. If maximum temperatures exceed the average September maxima of 15°C to 18°C, then there is a high likelihood that overwintering adult flies will find each other and mate and then lay eggs.

Town and orchard hot-spots will start to flare up with fruit fly trap catches. These spots are probably more humid, warmer and wetter than the rest of the area. These spots will act as winter reservoirs and spring push-starts for fruit fly populations. If you live near one keep a close watch on your fruit and in your traps for evidence of fruit fly build up.

Now is the start of the next fruit fly season. It is time to clean up fruit from last season and any new season fruit. Keep a close watch on apricots and loquats and any other early season fruits.

Make sure you have fruit fly traps out, baits in the shed ready to apply and fruit fly exclusion netting and/ or bags ready to deploy.

Likely fruit fly activity in September

Generally, in September in the GMV, Queensland fruit fly start to move out of their warm, winter refuges into parks, gardens and orchards looking for food and places to mate and then lay eggs.

Most overwintered adult Qff will need to mate before they can lay eggs into your fruit.

However, dusk temperatures have to be just right – or they won't mate. If your backyard or orchard reaches a minimum of about 15°C at sunset and you or your neighbours had fruit fly last season, then this could be the start of the next damaging Qff population.

Qff adults that have overwintered will die soon after the spring warm-up. BUT they will mate and lay eggs into fruit before they die.

So, from now on:

1. Put Qff monitoring traps out
2. Check traps at least once a week
3. Check for the presence of young and ripening fruit
4. Check fruit for sting marks and/or associated rot development
5. If Qff are present net fruit and/or bait crops with fruit fly baits
6. Pick and destroy all infested fruit properly

These steps are the best strategy to reduce the impact of overwintering Qff on next season's crops in your backyard and your orchard.

Finding Fruit Flies in Your Fruit – Things to watch out for in September

As August comes to an end day length increases, the weather slowly warms up and the sap rises in your fruiting plants. The adult Queensland fruit fly, hidden throughout the winter in warm refuges in spots around the orchard and near buildings, also starts to feel the urge to get out of cover, find food and water, find a mate and start laying eggs into any fruit they can find.

Flies that have overwintered in your orchard, yard, park or riverbank will start to be attracted to fruit fly traps and you'll find a trapping peak in September. These are the overwintering flies and they have not long to live, mate and lay eggs. If there are any fruit around in August/ September, they should be removed and disposed of properly. This will reduce the size of the first spring/ summer fruit fly generation.

It is highly recommended to check any fruit around the area in which you live for fruit fly infestations and remove them if infested or protect them from fruit flies if they are not. You can protect them with fruit fly baits, traps and repellents as well as protective coverings such as netting and fruit bagging.

What does a fruit fly infested fruit look like?

Fruit flies often leave marks on the fruit at the point of egg-laying. These are called sting marks. But, not all fruits show obvious marks.

Sometimes fruit fly sting marks, the points where the female fly punctures the fruit and lays her eggs, show up as a black or brown wound on the skin. This occurs in most varieties of nectarine, loquat and apple. The apple sting mark often exudes juice.

This marking is a wound response by the fruit as well as the result of bacteria the fly injects with her eggs that break down the flesh so that newly hatched fruit fly eggs have some easy food to eat.

All fruit, even thicker skinned oranges rot away underneath the egg laying site and you can feel the softness in those spots with a slight push or squeeze of your fingers.

In some fruit there is no obvious sting mark evident, such as in blueberries and cherries. As eggs hatch the fruit rapidly breaks down but sometimes the skin stays pretty much intact but collapses as soon as you touch it.

When you see large holes – about 2mm wide - you are too late. These are exit holes. Eggs were laid into this fruit about 7 to 12 days previously, then they hatched into maggots which then matured enough to leave the fruit. Now, the fruit is pretty much empty of fruit fly – they are now present as pupae in the soil or leaf litter under the tree.

