

Riverside County AGRICULTURE

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A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

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Photo collage created by Rachael Johnson.

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Welcome New Members

We would like to "Thank You" for becoming part of the Farm Bureau Family.

Speakers outline COVID-19 impact on California farms

Courtesy of California Farm Bureau Federation

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson speaks during a virtual town hall meeting to discuss the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other participants included Roland Fumasi of Rabobank, Assembly member Susan Eggman, Daniel Kowalski of CoBank and Daniel Sumner of UC Davis.

The damage done to California agriculture in just a few weeks may take years to overcome.

"As we go in now and we start to see the numbers coming out, we begin to realize that there really is no one in agriculture who will remain untouched by the events of the past six or seven weeks," California Farm Bureau Federation President Jamie Johansson said during a virtual town hall Monday that focused on the economic impact of the COVID-19 emergency and resulting shelter-in-place orders.

The online town hall was hosted by the chairs of the state Assembly and Senate agricultural committees, Assemblymember Susan Eggman, D-Stockton, and Sen. Cathleen Galgiani, D-Stockton.

Much of California's agricultural production goes to food service, one of the hardest-hit sectors as restaurants closed or limited their operations.

"Many of us woke up and our markets were gone overnight," Johansson said. "You take away a million meals a day in a restaurant situation nationally, and there's going to be dramatic impact."

One of those effects is a shift in diets and buying habits.

Roland Fumasi, a vice president and senior analyst at Rabobank, said the pandemic-related surge in retail sales has leaned toward products in the middle of the store—nonperishable goods, in other words.

"When you think of the perimeter of the store, you think dairy, you think animal protein, you think fresh produce," Fumasi said. "Those are the cornerstones of California agriculture."

He documented in detail the pandemic's effect on commodity prices, including hits of 50% to the prices of fluid milk and cheese and 60% in butter. Beef prices have dropped 22% below their pre-pandemic levels, he added, noting that 59% of beef production goes to food service.

CONT. ON PAGE 3.....

Inside this Issue...

COVID-19 Impact.....2

COVID-19 Impact continued3

Spotted Lantern Fly4

Asian Giant Murder Hornets.....5

Pesticide Safety: Masks/Gloves..6

Free Produce Safety Training.....8

Calendar8

.....CONT. FROM PAGE 2. On the fresh-produce side, retail sales have been skewed upward by rising demand for potatoes and sweet potatoes.

Packaged salad, Fumasi noted, "better represents the core of vegetable production in California," because sales are closely tied to food service. Sales of packaged salads were off nearly 30% the week ending March 29, compared to the same week a year ago, he said, and remained down more than 20% as of April 12.

He said California fruit and vegetable farmers served by Rabobank have lost anywhere from 50% to 85% of their food-service markets.

Daniel Kowalski, vice president of the Knowledge Exchange Division for the cooperative lender CoBank, said agriculture "will have to endure a one-two punch here."

"We're going to have to get through the worst of the COVID shutdown impacts, and then we're going to have to crawl our way out of a slow economic recovery," Kowalski said.

Before the pandemic, Americans were spending half their food budgets on eating out, he said, echoing Fumasi's point that shoppers are now stocking up on nonperishables.

"Our diet has shifted an awful lot in just a very short period of time," Kowalski said.

"The damage to California agriculture will be determined by how long COVID-19 impacts our way of life, and that time period will be longer if there are multiple peaks in the number of cases, as there was with SARS in 2003 and the Spanish flu in 1918," he added.

Daniel Sumner, a professor of agricultural economics at the University of California, Davis, said one of the challenges in responding to the pandemic's market disruption is the sheer number of commodities California produces. An expansion of the food stamp program may be needed, he said.

"It's much easier to get money to the consumers and let them buy the food than to activate government programs to actually distribute food, which is really complicated," Sumner said.

Johansson noted that CFBF and the American Farm Bureau Federation have been talking to the U.S. Department of Agriculture about a voucher program that would help connect food banks with farmers who can help fill their specific needs.

Other issues affecting California farmers and ranchers include a strong dollar, decreased export demand and rising unemployment, Fumasi said. The timing of the pandemic isn't helping, either, he noted.

"What you typically have in the highly perishable products is that we have some ability to estimate what demand is going to look like tomorrow and next week," Fumasi said. "We've got a lot of historical data that supports that. That's all changed. We have very sporadic buying patterns at retail that makes it very challenging, especially for these products that really have to be harvested on a daily basis and then shipped directly to market."

Even so, Sumner said that although Americans have a lot to worry about, the food supply is not one of them.

"It's a sign of the strength of our food system that we don't have a big warehouse behind every supermarket," he said.

UC Cooperative Extension helps raise the alarm on a looming insect threat

By Jeannette E. Warnert, Communications Specialist, Agriculture and Natural Resources, UC Kearney Research and Extension Center

Strikingly beautiful with a striped yellow abdomen and ruby red and black polka dot wings, the spotted lanternfly's esthetic appeal belies its destructive nature.

"Spotted lantern fly is a major threat to apples, grapes, stone fruits, roses, landscape trees and the timber industry," said Surendra Dara, UC Cooperative Extension entomology and biologicals advisor in San Luis Obispo, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. "The agricultural industry and the public need to be looking out for this insect to prevent its migration and establishment in California."



An adult spotted lanternfly in Pennsylvania with its wings spread. (Photo: Surendra Dara)

Native to China, spotted lanternflies were first introduced into the United States in 2014 when their presence was confirmed in Berks County, Penn. They have since established populations in New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware and Maryland. Spotted lanternflies are little more than a nuisance in their native range because they evolved along with controlling factors – such as predators and microbes – that achieved a natural balance. But when they arrive in new territory, the pest multiplies quickly and ravages plants.

While quarantine, management and research aim to control the pest where it has already taken hold, Dara is amplifying warnings of the pests' dire potential in agriculture-rich California and its ability to clandestinely hitchhike across the country. He held a webinar in May that attracted 130 participants from across California and the West, created a video, and posted articles in his eJournal and the Journal of Integrated Pest Management about current distribution, pest detection efforts and management strategies.

Inch-long adult spotted lanternflies have a nearly three-inch wingspan. Like giant aphids, the immature and mature stages of the pest suck sap out of plants and trees, depleting nutrients and reducing plant vigor, Dara said. While feeding, they emit waste sugars that cover plant leaves and invite fungi to grow black sooty mold, a coating that inhibits the plants' photosynthesis.

"SLFs can kill the host," Dara said. "However, some survive because, when the plants start to die, the pest goes away to search for a healthier host, giving the plant the opportunity to recover."

In the eastern U.S., residents say spotted lanternflies affect their quality of life and ability to enjoy the outdoors. The pest covers trees, swarms in the air and their honeydew can coat decks and playground equipment.



The spotted lanternfly egg mass looks like a splash of mud. (Photo: Surendra Dara)

Spotted lanternfly movement is aided by females' ability to lay their nondescript egg masses on smooth surfaces of natural and human made objects, such as packages sent from distribution centers, long-haul trucks, railroad containers, recreational vehicles and automobiles.

"The egg masses are covered with a waxy gray-brown coating that looks like a splash of mud," Dara said. "You may not notice it."

Studies are underway to determine SLF egg-laying preferences.

Another concern for California in the face of a potential SLF infestation is the abundance of tree-of-heaven, itself an exotic pest from China and spotted lanternflies' favorite host. Tree-of-heaven – with roots, leaves and bark used in traditional Chinese medicine – was brought to California by Chinese migrant workers during the Gold Rush. Its tendency to grow rapidly and multiply quickly has resulted in its designation as a noxious weed.

Tree-of-heaven does offer a potential control strategy should SLF come to California. Landowners can remove 85% of tree-of-heaven specimens in a grove, including all the female plants. The remaining 15% of tree-of-heaven will be irresistible to spotted lanternfly. The insects will congregate in the trees, which may be treated with systemic insecticides to kill the entire population.

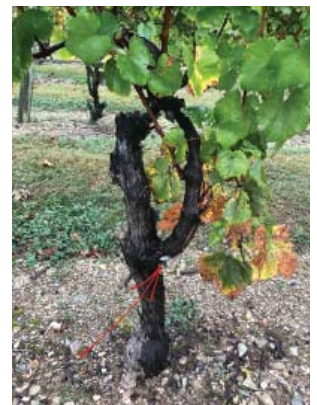
This is just one potential spotted lanternfly control strategy that could be part of an integrated pest management program. Other potential options Dara shared in his webinar and other communications are:

Traditional biocontrol. A parasitic wasp introduced into the United States in 1908 to control gypsy moths also appears to parasitize SLF eggs. Research may permit the introduction of other harmless natural SLF enemies from the pest's native range.

Microbial control. Naturally occurring fungi or those available as biopesticides can bring down SLF populations.

Mechanical control. Sticky bands placed on tree or vine trunks will trap the pest as it moves about.

Outreach. Communicate widely the concern about egg mass transport so people will inspect packages and vehicles and destroy egg masses. Go to <https://ucanr.edu/News/> for the article to view the video and eJournal.



The red arrow points to a resting spotted lanternfly on a Pennsylvania grapevine trunk. (Photo: Surendra Dara)



Asian Giant Hornet specimen Murder hornets invade headlines, not the U.S.

UCR entomologist: News accounts exaggerate current threat of Asian Giant Hornets

By Jules L Bernstein, Senior Public Information Officer,
University of California, Riverside

Though “murder hornets” are dominating recent headlines, there are no Asian Giant Hornets currently known to be living in the U.S. or Canada, according to UC Riverside Entomology Research Museum Senior Scientist Doug Yanega.

Yanega is one of the country’s foremost insect identification experts. Beekeepers in Canada consulted him when a colony of the 2-inch-long hornets — the world’s largest hornet species — was discovered in the Canadian city of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island in September 2019.

This was the first sighting of the hornet in North America, and authorities eradicated that nest to prevent it from becoming established. According to Yanega, “There have not been any sightings in 2020 that would suggest the eradication attempt was unsuccessful.”

A resident on the U.S. side of the border, about 50 miles from Nanaimo in Blaine, Washington, reported two additional Asian Giant Hornet sightings in December 2019. The Washington State Department of Agriculture collected one of these hornets, which was dead. The other reportedly flew into a nearby forest.

Neither that live hornet nor its nest were ever found, but it is unlikely that the insect is still alive, Yanega said.

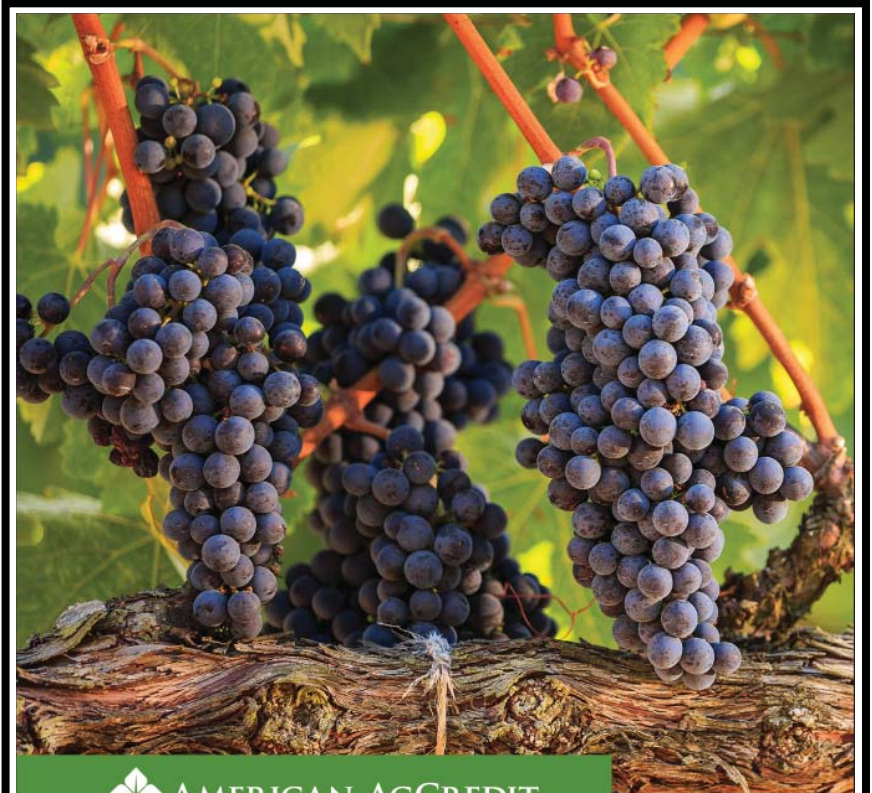
Recent genetic tests confirm that the dead hornet was not genetically related to the eradicated Nanaimo nest.

“The fact that the second hornet turned out to be genetically different somewhat raises the odds that there could be more of them,” Yanega said. “However, right now all authorities are doing is asking people to keep their eyes peeled in case there were queens that escaped destruction and established their own nests nearby.”

The sighting is a concern, as Asian Giant Hornets can destroy honeybee hives and their venom is more toxic to humans than that of a honeybee.

The hornet spotted in December was likely introduced to North America at the same time as those eradicated in Nanaimo. Therefore, if any of them are still living, they would be in the immediate vicinity of Vancouver Island, he said.

There are an estimated 10 million insects, less than 2 million of which are “known species.” Yanega can identify about 90 percent or more of them, both known and unknown, to the rank of family or better.



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N95 Alternatives for Pesticide Handling

Due to PPE shortage during the current COVID-19 crisis, DPR has compiled a list of respirators and exposure controls that offer the same or better protection for employees who are required to use N95 respirators.

If the label requires an N95, you may also use these respirators

Filtering facepiece respirators with the following designations

- N99, N100
- R95, R99, R100
- P95, P99, P100

If product contains oil, do not use "N" series masks

Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRs)

- All PAPR cartridges have HEPA filters that provide more protection than N95 respirators

Elastomeric respirators (half-face or full-face) with particulate filters or combination cartridge/filters

- N, R, or P filters with 95, 99, or 100 efficiency
- Filter can be part of cartridge, an attachment, or stand-alone
- Some chemical cartridges can also filter particulates, which is indicated by a magenta or purple color on the cartridge

If product contains oil, do not use "N" series

Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)

- Not the same thing as SCUBA
- See 3 CCR 6739 (k) for air quality requirements

Can't find a respirator?

1. **Ask your PCA if there is a product that doesn't require respiratory protection**
2. **Mix/load pesticides in a closed system** † (see 3 CCR 6746 and 6738.4 (c) & (d))
3. **Apply pesticides from an enclosed cab** † (see 3 CCR 6738.4 (e))

NOTE: #3 is only applicable to particulate respirators and only if the enclosed cab has a functioning ventilation system

† the required PPE must still be available

Respirators must be NIOSH approved. Before wearing any respirator required by label, permit conditions, regulations, or employer policy, users must be medically able to wear a respirator, be trained, and fit tested. Employers must have a written respiratory protection program as detailed in 3 CCR 6739. https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/whs/ind_hygiene_ppe.htm

Gloves for Handling Pesticides

Due to PPE shortage during the current COVID-19 crisis, DPR has compiled some glove-safety tips.

If you use reusable gloves, they must be same material as label-required disposable gloves.

Chemical resistant gloves must be at least 14 mil thick†, so substitute for thicker gloves of the same material.

† except laminate and polyethylene gloves

Glove Category Selection Key

Label Code	Materials Required by Law	Material Code
A	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	1: Laminate
B	1,2	2: Butyl
C	1,2,3,4,7,8	3: Nitrile
D	1,2	4: Neoprene
E	1,3,4,8	5: Natural
F	1,2,3,8	6: Polyethylene
G	1,8	7: PVC
H	1,8	8: Viton

All but Laminate and Polyethylene must be 14 mils or thicker

Caring for Reusable Gloves

1. Inspect your gloves before putting them on. **Never wear damaged chemical resistant gloves!**
2. Wash your hands with soap and water before you put them on.
3. Wear your gloves as required by label or regulation when performing handler tasks.
4. Wash your gloved hands with soap and water before removing gloves.
5. Dry and store your clean gloves away from pesticides, in a cool dry place, and away from direct sunlight.
6. After removing gloves, wash your hands with soap and water.

Do not touch contaminated gloves with bare hands!

Be sure to follow 3 CCR 6738. For more information go to: https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/whs/ind_hygiene_ppe.htm

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Register at Food Safety Training Partnership; visit <http://foodsafetytrainingpartnership.org> for more information or call 916-561-5672.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

 June 10, 2020 - 5:30 PM, Riverside County Farm Bureau Board of Directors meeting, Johnny Russo's Italian Kitchen in Banning.

Food and Farm News

Courtesy of CFBB

Fair cancellations alter youth livestock sales

Cancellation of many county fairs around California due to the pandemic will have ripple effects for participants in youth and junior livestock events. Students who raise animals to show and sell at a fair often use the proceeds for college savings or to re-invest in future projects. County fairs that have already canceled are looking at alternatives, such as online sales, or making other arrangements for the students to sell their animals.

Retail avocado sales come back from initial drop

Avocado marketers say they weathered a couple of “very stressful” weeks after stay-at-home orders took effect, but since have seen retail sales recover. The California Avocado Commission says sales have “held up fairly well” during the pandemic. Farmers reduced harvest in March but have since increased the amount of fruit reaching market. A bank report says retail avocado sales rose 20% year-to-year during the first month of shelter-in-place rules.

Record blueberry supplies head into a difficult market

Blueberry production from California farms will peak during the next two weeks and marketers say that, combined with the pandemic and a surge of imports from Mexico, has driven prices lower. The California Blueberry Commission says COVID-19 has slowed demand at both retail and restaurants as California builds toward a record crop. The commission says some farmers may have to decide whether to harvest all their blueberries this year.

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