

CITRUS 'GROWER TRIALS' – FIRST ENTRY, October 27, 2006

PEACE RIVER GROWERS ASSOC WORKS TO HELP GROWERS SHARE INFO:

In the months since the Citrus Canker Eradication Program has ceased, growers are more confident about their future in the citrus industry. This confidence seems to stem from their ability to have some control of their own destiny. No longer are growers afraid the eradication program will destroy their groves. Rather they can now take the initiative to find a way to live with citrus canker.

Maps previously published show the spread of citrus canker certainly did not stop with the eradication program. As more groves are infected, growers now have the ability to determine their personal course of action. Our members are choosing to continue the fight against canker and are looking for new ways to deal with the disease. As these real life experiments occur new information is gleaned—information which could help other growers.

To assist in this process, PRVCGA has interviewed several growers who are currently experimenting in an effort to find a way to live with the disease and keep their trees productive. While it is too early to have any results, there is information and lessons already to be gleaned by other growers, should they have the need to begin their own trials.

GROWER TRIALS FROM PEACE RIVER PRODUCTION REGION – Submitted by PRVCGA

Pelican Grove:

Pelican Grove was determined to have a large number of infected trees within four of the ten blocks—all on the south end of the grove. The owners, Cary Mercer and V.C. Hollingsworth, concerned about impacting their neighbors determined action was needed. They decided to experiment with defoliation of the infected trees and any trees touching the infected trees.

They custom built a sprayer and had two employees hand spray each tree, on both sides of the row. After two weeks, an additional application was completed on the leaves (not the whole tree) that did not separate. A 2% mixture of DynaGro was used. Seven weeks after the initial application Pelican Grove has flush, which looks like growth after a freeze. Cary reports twig die back the size of a pencil and is now monitoring the grove for additional canker lesions and to determine if there will be additional die back before proceeding with additional actions.

When asked if he had other suggestions for growers, Cary states growers should be very careful to decontaminate between blocks and to thoroughly wash down equipment after product use.

Bright Hour:

Canker Inspectors found 15 infected trees in Bright Hour initially and then found another 232 trees soon afterwards. This made grower Rowdy Bateman rethink the destruction of the trees, as he has already lost a portion the grove to the Citrus Canker Eradication Program.

Rowdy decided to try defoliation of the infected trees and a ten row buffer on each side of the infected trees using a 2% rate of DynaGro. Application was made twice with a speed sprayer, then a third time with a hand sprayer to achieve complete defoliation.

After one month, Rowdy is beginning to see pinhead foliage. He also reports some twig die back approximately the size of your little finger, which he plans to prune. Rowdy feels the key to defoliation is delivering a large volume of the defoliant with thorough leaf coverage. Lower PH of the water used made a small difference in the effectiveness of the spray. He also recommends against using the speed sprayer, as it did not deliver enough volume.

Orange-Co:

Incidences of Citrus Canker continue to be found in Orange-Co. After a loss of acreage (89 acres and several hundred scattered trees) to the eradication program, discussions with the scientific community and some individual research, grove manager Jerry Newlin decided upon a three-fold approach.

In all canker blocks defoliation of the infected leaves and branches is underway in an effort to reduce inoculum levels before summer storms further spread the infection. After coming to the conclusion burning infected trees was not the answer in every case, Orange-co began with defoliating the entire tree, but soon found this to be expensive, cumbersome and difficult to do effectively.

To assure canker is found quickly, Orange-Co is using an aggressive survey program, a key part of the effort. When lesions are found, a defoliating rate of copper (2,000 PPM Magna-Bon CS-2005) is used in a hand sprayer mounted on an ATV with a tank to treat the infected area of the tree.

Additionally, Orange-co is experimenting with physically removing the infected limbs by clipping them off the trees. Infected limbs are bagged, as to not move infection through the grove, and transported away from the grove for destruction. If the infection is very light then leaf/limb removal will be an option, if the infection is heavy, the defoliation method will be used.

Fresh Fruit blocks will be handled the same as the processed blocks with the added option of tree removal as a distinct possibility. Timing for DPI Fresh Fruit inspections will be critical with the narrow window allowed by the CHIP plan; therefore, completely eliminating all lesions could be necessary.

Following any of the methods discussed, impacted blocks (10 acres) will immediately have 250 PPM of Magna-Bon CS-2005 liquid copper applied in 140 GPA with an air-blast sprayer. The thought here is, at this rate, Magna-Bon is approved to use in a disinfectant wash rack as a direct canker killing agent so it should, at least temporarily, kill all active or exposed canker in the sprayed block.

Subsequently, these "hot blocks" are put on a priority list so they will be sprayed every 30-45 days over the warm months. The rest of the uninfected blocks in the grove will be treated with some form of copper (3 lbs Kocide 2000 per acre currently) at least twice during the summer months.

Jerry Newlin, Orange Co VP/Citrus Production Division, advises other growers to consider leaf miner and psyllid treatment as a part of the defoliation treatment process. He has found new growth is quickly infested, which could cause a portal for the canker bacteria to further infect. He also states the timing of treatments is very important and should be well thought-out to achieve the highest effectiveness.

Mac Turner Groves:

Mac Turner who has been plagued with Citrus Canker in his groves for years, now is able to experiment with treatments instead of the destruction he has experienced through the Eradication Program. New infection is in an isolated grove, in proximity to past infected groves. Trees were defoliated using copper nitrate at a rate of 2 gallons per 100. Two applications were used, one week apart, approximately one month ago. The defoliant was applied using a hand sprayer attached to a speed sprayer. Mac sprayed a buffer around the infection, which varied depending upon the level of infection.

Mac is currently scouting the grove for additional incidences of citrus canker and is monitoring the effects of the defoliation. When asked what he would do different if the attempt has to be repeated, he would consider adjusting the rate of defoliant possibly using a higher rate the first application and a lower rate the second application. He also would consider a larger buffer, depending upon the level of infection. Mac will be putting an additional copper spray on the grove for protection soon.

INDIAN RIVER CITRUS GROWERS ALSO TACKLING INFORMATION FLOW ISSUES

Growers in other areas are also experimenting with Citrus Canker to speed the process of finding a way for Florida growers to live with or maybe even eventually eradicate the disease. Fresh fruit growers are at the greatest risk, as they could experience immediate loss of their ability to market fresh fruit.

The Indian River Citrus League is conducting production manager meetings to openly discuss these efforts. Doug Bournique, Executive Director of the League, states his area's growers are working together like never before as growers realize neighbors are dependent upon neighbors. For this effort to work, everyone has to be involved. Florida's regional citrus grower associations in conjunction with Southeast AgNet are taking a lead in creating a website where growers can themselves begin sharing information about grower experiences in the field. Growers statewide, and globally for that matter, are invited to submit their experiences to help build on this growing library of information.

It is expected these efforts will increase as Citrus Canker continues to spread and more growers are impacted. If you have information to share, please send to growertrials@southeastagnet.com.

ALLIED INDUSTRY INVITED TO SUBMIT IDEAS FOR 'GROWER TRIALS':

If anyone in allied industries has a trial they would like to see performed with their products please let us know. We can report these possibilities in hopes of helping find test acreage.

Tell your grower neighbors about this 'grower trials' website. We look forward to it being a valued Southeast AgNet service for the citrus community. To submit your information or to contact us, simply e-mail us at growertrials@southeastagnet.com.