

Can you tell me a little bit more about broad mite? I know it has been in Southern California for some time, but I've been hearing it's up here now also.

You have been hearing correctly, and yes we have confirmed finds of broad mite on the Central Coast of California. I have received samples of them here at my office and have been told of more finds out in the field.

Broad mites, *Polyphagotarsonemus latus*, are very small mites that one generally will find on the newer leaves of blackberry (in fact, I've heard of them only on primocane blackberries, and have not seen them on raspberries nor strawberries) late in the season. This corresponds with initial finds of these mites on primocane blackberries in Arkansas and the American Southwest several years ago.

The colonization of these mites on the leaves gives them a rumpled appearance that some experienced growers might associate with damage from Round Up (glyphosate) herbicide. In severe cases observed elsewhere, broad mite infestations can lead to aborted flower buds and reduced leaf area.

Broad mites are yellowish in color and the females have a white stripe on the back. The eggs of broad mites are quite distinctive, being translucent, distinctively dimpled and covered in white speckles (see Picture 1 below).

Interestingly and importantly, broad mites are associated with warm humid conditions very much like that found in greenhouses and the weather that we have as a matter of fact been having on the Central Coast until recently. Also, it would not be totally unexpected to have these mites overwinter here, since our winters are rather mild.

Control of broad mites can be difficult. The UC IPM guidelines recommend the use of sulfur or oils to control them in citrus, but these have yet to be tried in blackberries. It is expected that repeated applications will be necessary to bring these under some modicum of control.



Picture 1: Broad mite adult. Note dimpled eggs surrounding the adult.