

Early hull split this year?

Franz Niederholzer, UCCE Orchards Advisor, Colusa and Sutter/Yuba Counties

Early bloom and a warm March contributed to rapid almond crop development this year, with kernel fill at least a week ahead of past years. Please consider the following suggestions when planning for hull split and harvest.

- **Monitor orchards earlier than normal for the start of hull split.** UC Davis [hull split prediction model](#) suggests **1% hull split could be reached much earlier, perhaps 10-12 days earlier than last year.** [In 2025 the first hull split spray at the Nickels Soil Lab in Arbuckle was June 23.] We won't know until it happens, but being ready to spray (if you are planning to apply a hull split spray) and checking for hull split earlier than usual can't hurt.
- Hull split spraying reminders:
 - Spraying a little early is better than spraying late as unprotected split nuts can be infested with navel orangeworm (NOW) and growers (and perhaps their neighbors) suffer increased crop loss compared to finishing spraying by 1% hull split. **To repeat; the first hull split spray should be finished by 1% hull split.** An experienced PCA recently told me that higher worm damage can occur in neighboring orchards when one orchard is sprayed late and NOW levels rise.
 - Slow sprayer speeds (for example, 2 MPH) and higher spray volumes (150-200 gallons per acre) deliver better pest management compared to higher sprayer speeds and less spray volume (for example, 3 MPH;100 GPA).
 - Spraying when relative humidity drops below 40% can reduce spray coverage through evaporation. For better spray coverage, apply foliar sprays in the late evening into early morning under high heat and low humidity conditions.
- If planning to use ant bait this season consider advancing your ant bait spreading timing to match up with projected earlier harvest. If we have a poor almond drying year (smoke, higher humidity, etc.) it will be important to have good ant control where treatment is needed.
- Talk with your PCA about hull rot management with El Niño forecast to arrive. If El Niño increases regional humidity, vigorous orchards with a history of hull rot could see an increase in hull rot strikes. Irrigation and nitrogen management are key parts of managing hull rot, but an early hull split spray may contribute to reducing (not eliminate) hull rot incidence.