

What is the story with light brown apple moth on the Central Coast? Is the USDA regulatory program still in effect?

The USDA regulatory program for light brown apple moth (better known by its acronym LBAM) is still going strong and is very active. These efforts are aimed at limiting the spread of this regulated pest outside of the quarantine zone around the Bay Area which now reaches down to King City, since other areas of the country and the world we send our fruits and vegetables to don't want it. For example, the province of British Columbia, Canada, to whom California exports a lot of berries and broccoli, currently has a zero tolerance for LBAM in these shipments, and a positive LBAM detection there could actually result in Canada refusing to accept shipments of harvested fruit from this county.

Complicating the matter this year is that our warm winter has resulted in larger than normal numbers of leafrollers, including LBAM, in the fields, which of course result in a higher number of detections and positive finds of LBAM. In the way of review, any positive finds of this pest at the monthly cooler inspections are followed by field inspections, which on the occasion of more LBAM larval finds have resulted in closure of that field in part or in whole. It is only after it is determined by inspectors that the field is clean and no longer presents a risk of spreading LBAM, will the grower be allowed to resume shipping produce from that field to outside of the quarantine area.

Growers who intend to ship produce to Canada must sign a compliance agreement every year with the County Agricultural Commissioner. One of the critical elements of this compliance agreement is a documented program of visual scouting for LBAM on the part of the grower. This scouting must be documented and performed weekly during the harvest season by a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) or an approved scout.

There is a lot of further information available about the regulation and management of light brown apple moth in berries on the Central Coast:

Further elaboration on the inspection protocol can be found here:
<http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=4993>

Information in general about light brown apple moth in caneberries can be found here:
<http://ucipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r71300211.html>

Information in general about light brown apple moth in strawberries can be found here:
<http://ucipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r734500311.html>

The above has been an article about light brown apple moth in strawberries and caneberries. For further information concerning this pest and other matters in berries, please contact Mark Bolda at 831-763-8025 or mpbolda@ucanr.edu

Importance:

- Canada is our county's largest trading partner.
- Serious consequences will result if LBAM is intercepted by Canadian officials on a shipment.
- The grower's records will be examined; if the grower has not complied with the terms of the Compliance Agreement, fines can be levied on the grower.
- The entire industry will be affected. Canada could refuse to accept harvested fruit from the County of Santa Cruz or the State of California. This would cause a drop in price received for all growers due to the extra supply of berries in the market.
- Growers and pest control advisors on the Central Coast should be alerted to the gravity of the current leafroller situation. Owing to a warm winter, large numbers of leafrollers, including light brown apple moth (LBAM), have been observed throughout the Monterey Bay area.
- Berry growers need to be diligent in using best pest management practices for leafrollers (given in other posts on this blog as well as the UC IPM website) right now to prevent additional field shutdowns and regulatory scrutiny. The issue is particularly important for organic berry fields where worm control tactics are limited.
- This is a very big deal, because the USDA – CDFA regulatory effort is still in full swing. If LBAM is detected in a shipment, it could very well result in field closure for a long period of time, handing eye watering losses to the grower. Very much worth paying attention to the matter of LBAM on the Central Coast.
- In the way of review, growers shipping should have a compliance agreement issued to them by the County Agricultural Commissioner. Harvested fruit is inspected on a monthly basis at the cooler, and if a suspect LBAM larva is found, the shipment is held up. An investigation is launched during this time to confirm whether the larva is actually an LBAM. During this time, no fruit may be moved from the field that was the source of the lot. Results may take days to get back, and if it is confirmed to be LBAM by DNA laboratory analysis the USDA- CDFA people will visit the grower for an inspection of the block or field where the larva was found. It is very important to note that while the grower is waiting for results to get back on a suspect larva, he or she should be very active in cleaning up the field - pre-emptively treating with insecticides and removing leaf rolls.
- If on inspection more larvae are found in the field (they don't miss many, your threshold of detection is very low), the field is shut down for shipment outside the area of quarantine, and regulatory sprays must be done and need to be repeated until inspections find ZERO suspect LBAM larvae in the field. Regulatory sprays have to be witnessed by USDA or CDFA personnel. The whole process can take a month or longer, when one figures in delays, shortage of inspection personnel and mandated limits on work hours for state and Federal employees.
- Compliance agreements issued to growers require weekly inspections (every seven days) for LBAM of the production field by a PCA or qualified scout. If this weekly scouting is not done or records of it not kept, a grower having a positive LBAM find (starting 30 days to harvest for export to British Columbia, Canada) will be in violation of the compliance agreement. This will result in the compliance agreement rescinded (ie taken away) and the possibility of a hefty fine.
- PCA's are busy professionals, and sometimes the weather doesn't comply it might be difficult for them to get to the field every seven days. That's why it is so important for the grower to have qualified scouts on the farm doing weekly LBAM inspections (they are not difficult). Mark has held a number of trainings already, and will **hold two more trainings; one in English on May 28 at 8 am at the UCCE office, 1430 Freedom Boulevard, Suite E (same office as before) and another on May 29 in Spanish at 8 am at the same location.** The trainings aren't long, tops maybe an hour after which each participant will receive a signed certificate of participation. If you need help with management of leafrollers right now, you can contact Mark (mpbolda@ucanr.edu), or Hillary (hthomas@calstrawberry.org), directly to provide additional resources or to consult with you on the site specific issue, risk factors, and management options.