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## NEW PEST OF GRAPES SUSPECTED

OCTOBER 13, 2004

The Lake County Department of Agriculture recently found five (5) male mealybugs of a potentially serious grapevine pest in a vineyard in the Big Valley growing region. The mealybugs were identified as belonging to the genus Planococcus, which is the same genus as the Vine Mealybug. The male mealybugs can not be identified to species level, so females will need to be found and submitted for identification in order to determine if we have found the Vine Mealybug (Planococcus ficus) or not. This find was a result of the Agriculture Department's ongoing, countywide Vine Mealybug detection survey program, which is in its second year.

The male mealybugs can fly about ½ mile on its own, and it can be wind-blown much further, given the right weather conditions. With this in mind, the Department of Agriculture has placed additional traps in the area around this find in an attempt to locate a "hot spot" of mealybug activity. Once this is identified, agriculture department staff will visually inspect vineyards for the presence of female mealybugs. At that point we will be able to say definitively whether we do or do not have the Vine Mealybug in Lake County.

The Vine Mealybug is a serious pest of vineyards for numerous reasons. Some of these reasons are: 1) it feeds on the grape clusters, making them unmarketable; 2) it reduces vine vigor, which leads to loss of yield and a reduction of the productive lifespan of the vineyard; and 3) it produces copious amounts of honeydew, which supports the growth of sooty molds which cover the fruit and leaves. As of May 2004, the Vine Mealybug had been found in 16 counties in California, including Napa, Sonoma, and Yolo counties.

Eradication of mealybug populations from vineyards is difficult but not impossible. Early detection and implementation of known control efforts can greatly increase the eradication of unwanted pests. A team approach, involving growers, Pest Control Advisers, the County Agriculture Department, the University of California Cooperative Extension and industry representatives will be used to aggressively detect, control, and eradicate any Vine Mealybug infestations found in Lake County.

For further information, please contact the following:

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