

## Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

As many of our members are probably aware, the California Department of Food and Agriculture announced July 10 that Huanglongbing had been confirmed in a backyard kumquat tree in the San Gabriel area, about 10 miles from the state's first HLB detection in Hacienda Heights.

An adult psyllid collected there last month tested “incon-

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clusive” for HLB – a gray zone in the DNA testing protocol where the results don't meet the standard for declaring a bug HLB-positive but in some cases would meet the standard for plant tissue – so the survey crews returned to collect more ACP and some plant material. When that plant sample was tested, it came up positive, and

DNA from *liberibacter asiaticus* (the presumed causal agent of HLB) was isolated.

The tree was pulled and sent to the lab. Survey crews blanketed the area, and a five-mile quarantine has been established, partially overlapping the one around the Hacienda Heights location.

Earlier this year in this space, I described research by Dr. David Bartels, an entomologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Center for Plant Health Science & Technology in Texas, who gathered data about “inconclusive” ACP test results from Southern California and plotted the collection locations on a map. He was testing the official explanation,

which is that the borderline evidence of HLB in these insects is the result of lab error, random noise in the data, or some other reason. If the findings truly were random, he reasoned, so would be the spatial distribution of the sites where those bugs were collected.

What he found instead was that many of the “inconclusive” ACP collected throughout Southern California clustered in specific locations – more than a dozen of them, in San Diego, San Bernardino, Riverside and Los Angeles counties. Most of the clusters were in

the general vicinity of the Hacienda Heights HLB detection from 2012, but others were scattered across the LA basin, including one on the eastern end of the San Fernando Valley. Similar patterns have been observed in Texas, where the clusters generally have been found to surround infected trees.

Although the find site for the new HLB confirmation appears to be slightly outside one of the “hot” clusters identified by the Bartels analysis, it is consistent with the troubling theory underlying that analysis: that at least some “inconclusive” ACP test results actually are early evidence of HLB-infected trees. Which means there probably are bunches of them scattered around Southern California.

This likelihood heightens the importance of full cooperation with both our area-wide management program, and the CDEFA urban treatment program. Unfortunately, some of our urban residents still do not understand the risk, as has been demonstrated in recent weeks in Ojai. After a recent detection in town – the area near Bart's Books, for those who are familiar with the community – CDEFA hosted a public meeting and begin notifying residents within 400 meters of the find site that they would be conducting the usual pesticide applications to host plants.

That prompted a handful of activists with Pesticide Free Ojai Valley to begin trailing the CDEFA crews and distributing fliers containing misleading or false information about the materials being used, and urging residents to refuse to allow the treatments. As a result, the refusal rate in that area rose from the usual 1-2 percent to 20 percent.

Local growers have been enlisted to push back against this irresponsible and dangerous effort. The arrival of HLB is probably inevitable, even in Ojai, and if the disease finds a ready supply of hosts and vectors, the anti-pesticide group will have to take responsibility for helping destroy a valued element of the area's heritage. Perhaps the group should be renamed Citrus-Free Ojai Valley, since that would be the eventual outcome of its campaign.

### Planning under way for fall area-wide management

Earlier this year, when it became clear that efforts to stamp out the Asian citrus psyllid infestation in the eastern Santa Clara River Valley had failed, the Ventura County ACP-HLB Task Force determined that it was time to employ a different strategy.

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### What's Inside?

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# El Niño 2015: Is the end of the drought in sight?

By Sabrina Drill and Lorin Lima

Researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the California Department of Water Resources are predicting a 90 percent chance that California will see strong El Niño conditions this winter, with high precipitation. The chance has increased from 50 percent in March, and nearly all the computer models commonly used for prediction are now in agreement.

While there is not an absolute prediction of precipitation, there is a strong chance this El Niño could rival that last seen in 1997, with record high rainfalls. High precipitation would be a huge benefit in reducing the impacts of the drought conditions we've seen in recent years, although the heavy storms often associated with El Niño conditions pose serious risk of flooding. And the wet weather seen here may coincide with an opposite trend elsewhere. Worldwide, El Niño could bring drought conditions to Australia and parts of Asia. This has already led Citigroup and the UN to issue warnings about global shortages of wheat and other staples.

El Niño is the periodic warming of sea surface temperatures (SST) across the central and east-central Equatorial Pacific near South America often noticed around Christmas. Because of the timing, fishermen off the coast of South America in the 1600s named this phenomenon "El Niño" for the Christ child (literal translation "The (male) Child"). An El Niño event is defined by a three-month average warming of at least 0.9 °F (0.5 °C) in the east-central tropical Pacific Ocean and typically occurs at irregular intervals every two to seven years.

During an El Niño episode, affected regions experience extensive ocean warming and reduction in easterly trade winds. Off the Southern California coast, this leads to limited upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich deep water. This impacts the timing, amount, and distribution of precipitation worldwide, with implications for fisheries, agriculture, the environment, and even human health – El Niño-associated drought in India has been implicated in the start of the global flu epidemic in 1918.

El Niño is one phase of the larger El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle

that defines the fluctuations in temperature between the ocean and atmosphere in the east-central Equatorial Pacific. These surface temperature abnormalities have significant impacts on ocean processes, global weather, and climate. Recent decades have seen a trend toward more frequent and extreme El Niños. Historical data suggest this can be linked to climate change. The amplitude of the observed ENSO erraticism has increased by as much as 60 percent in the last 50 years. The increased frequency and strength of El Niño events may be a temporary climatic response, however. As lower layers of the ocean warm, El Niño events may become weaker.

## Take extra care when working around a tractor

By Mike Burns

The tractor is easily recognized as a farmer's most important tool, but it is also the most dangerous, accounting for a fourth of all agriculturally related deaths in the United States each year.

Many times, these accidents are the result of rollovers. Other times they involve someone being struck by a tractor or being caught in the PTO (power take-off) shafts.

By their very nature, accidents can be prevented. But for this to occur, everyone working with and around tractors and other pieces of farm equipment must be made aware of the potential dangers and the proper steps that they must take to prevent a mishap. This education process should begin with the farm operator and his foremen instructing all employees of proper safety.

Here are some important checkpoints to cover in any tractor-safety program:

- Walk around and do a visual inspection before operating the tractor.
- If the tractor doesn't have a rollover protective structure (ROPS) and seatbelt, have them installed.
- Keep all shields and guards in place.
- Do not allow anyone other than the driver to ride on a tractor. No exceptions.
- Drive at a safe speed, whether on a field or highway.
- Fields are loaded with booby traps such as ditches and steep, slippery slopes. Be aware of them, as they can flip a tractor.
- Don't carry loads higher than recom-

While this El Niño may help alleviate our current drought conditions, we need to effectively capture and store rainfall if we are to address changing precipitation patterns in the future. In the words of Doug Parker, Director of the UC California Institute for Water Resources, "The key is that a lot of our drought management comes from the groundwater and that's a great resource during the drought, but you have to put that water back in the ground. It's how we're going to get through the next drought."

— Sabrina Drill is natural resources advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. Lorin Lima is staff research associate for UCCE in San Diego.

mended in your tractor's operator's manual.

- Widen the tractor's wheel base to help prevent rollovers.
  - Do not hitch to anything other than the draw bar for pulling.
  - Turn off the engine whenever you get out of the driver's seat or cab.
  - Use common sense: turn off the engine when filling the fuel tank and don't smoke.
- Studies show that safe work practices are vital in reducing injuries and deaths involving tractors. Ask yourself the following questions: Is the operator's platform clear of debris; is the reflective "slow moving vehicle" emblem posted; are lights and flashers operational; are tires properly inflated; are the hydraulics free of leaks; can the brakes be locked together; is the fire extinguisher in place; and is there a fully supplied first aid kit on board?

Familiarize yourself with the tractor operator's manual and warning decals, and pay particular attention to the safety information. Make sure everyone who operates a tractor has received training and is physically fit. Keep bystanders and others away from tractor operation area. Take the time to be safe.

— Mike Burns is Farm Bureau Group manager for State Compensation Insurance Fund. Contact him at [mjburns@scif.com](mailto:mjburns@scif.com). Since 1943, the California Farm Bureau-State Fund partnership has provided affordable worker compensation insurance coverage and accident prevention training for agricultural employers and their employees.

## Notes from the CEO

(cont'd from front page)

Instead of eradication-style treatments, conducted in response to individual trap detections and encompassing commercial citrus within 800 meters of each find site, the Task Force directed that the east end of the valley transition to area-wide management (AWM). Under AWM, large areas of citrus are treated in a coordinated fashion within a relatively short time frame to achieve maximum suppression of an established pest population.

Planning and executing the AWM strategy was challenging. It involved nearly 7,000 acres and hundreds of growers, along with numerous pest-control advisors and operators, and multiple packinghouse field divisions. The area from the east side of Santa Paula to the Los Angeles County line was divided into eight psyllid management areas (PMAs), with all citrus acreage within a given PMA expected to be treated with ACP-effective insecticides within a two-week window. Treatments had to be closely coordinated with harvest activities, and modified in response to changing weather conditions.

Treatments commenced in mid-January at the far eastern end of the valley, and rolled westward, each new PMA treatment window opening a week after the preceding one. The AWM effort concluded in late March, but it has taken until this month to determine the level of compliance because of difficulties related to the submission and analysis of pesticide use data.

The good news is that participation rates were very high. According to our grower liaison's analysis of pesticide use reports, between 80 and 93 percent of the citrus acreage within individual PMAs was treated for ACP, the average being 87 percent.

This is important, because the California Department of Food and Agriculture has adopted a policy that it will not conduct urban buffer treatments adjacent to a PMA unless at least 75 percent of the commercial acreage within it has been treated. These urban buffer treatments are critical to prevent ACP in urban yards from re-infesting neighboring orchards after commercial treatments are conducted. Because all the PMAs exceeded that 75-percent threshold,

those urban treatments will be conducted simultaneously with the next round of AWM treatments.

The bad news is that it took so long to collect and analyze the PUR data. Growers, PCAs and applicators can speed that up in the future by filing their PURs promptly and electronically. Those who continue to file them in paper form are clogging the system, because all that information then has to be entered by hand at the Agricultural Commissioner's Office. The backlog can easily delay collection of the information by months.

The second round of coordinated AWM treatments will commence this fall. And because the local ACP infestation has continued to spread, nearly all of Ventura County will be involved this time.

In addition to the PMAs where AWM was implemented last spring, the fall treatment – which will commence Aug. 30, will include much of the western Santa Clara River Valley. It also will encompass most of the Las Posas and Santa Rosa valleys, as well as a part of the Oxnard Plain. Eradication treatments have been suspended in those zones, although all growers are asked to incorporate an ACP-effective material with any other applications made during the summer months. Those who do not plan such an application are expected to conduct a dedicated summer ACP treatment. (A list of approved materials may be found online at [www.ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/r107304411.html](http://www.ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/r107304411.html).)

Detailed information about which zones are making the transition to AWM and which are remaining under eradication will be presented during a workshop on Thursday, Aug. 13, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Courtyard by Marriott, 600 E. Esplanade Drive, Oxnard. Attendance is free, but please RSVP by calling us at (805) 289-0155 or sending email to [admin@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:admin@farmbureauvc.com).

— John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at [john@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:john@farmbureauvc.com).

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**Aquarium of the Pacific** — Adult (12+ yrs): \$19.95 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs): \$11.95 (save \$3). Valid thru 12/31/15.

**California Adventure and Disneyland 1-Day Park Hopper** — Adult (10+ yrs): \$144 (save \$6); Child (3-9 yrs): \$139 (save \$5). Valid thru 12/31/15.

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**Hurricane Harbor** — Valencia. General (3+ yrs) \$27.95 (Save \$13.04). Valid any 1 day of the 2015 season.

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**Legoland** — "E" tickets only. Adult (13+ yrs) \$74.95 (save \$10.05); Child (3-12 yrs) \$69.96 (save \$9.05). Includes 2nd day free ticket within 90 days of 1st visit.

**Resort Hopper Ticket** — "E" Ticket only. Adult (13+ yrs) \$79.95 (save \$29.05); Child (3-12 yrs) \$74.95 (save \$28.05). Includes 2 visits to Legoland, including new Waterpark (seasonal) and 2 visits to Sea Life Aquarium. Valid thru 12/31/2015.

**Magic Mountain** — \$43.50 (savings \$26.49) General use ticket (3 yrs. +). Valid thru 9/27/15.

**Raging Waters** — San Dimas. General \$30.95 (Save \$11.04, must be taller than 48"). Valid any 1 day of the 2015 season.

**Regal Cinemas** — Unrestricted tickets \$8.75 (regularly \$9.50 Sun.-Thurs, \$10 Fri.-Sat). Good at Edwards, Regal, Signature and United Artists Theaters. No expiration.

**San Diego Safari Park** — (Formerly Wild Animal Park) Adult-African Tram Safari: \$40.75 (save \$7.25) (12+ yrs); Child-African Tram Safari: \$33 (save \$5) (3-11 yrs). Africa Tram Safari includes admission, unlimited use of the Journey into Africa Tour, Conservation Carousel and other shows/exhibits. Valid through 12/31/15.

**San Diego Sea World - 2nd Day Free Ticket.** First Visit must occur on or before 9/30/15. 2nd visit valid thru 12/25/2015. Adult (10 yrs. +) \$57 (save \$32); Child (3-9 yrs.) \$57 (save \$26). **Summer Special.** Weekday one-visit ticket, valid thru 9/30/2015; Adult (10+ yrs) \$50 (save \$39); Child (3-9 yrs) \$50 (save \$33). Available thru August 31, 2015 (excludes Sat & Sun).

**San Diego Zoo** — Adult (12+ yrs): \$40.75 (save \$7.25). Child (3-11 yrs): \$33 (save \$5). Includes admission, unlimited use of Guided Bus Tour, Express Bus, Skyfari Aerial Tram and all shows & exhibits. Valid through 12/31/15.

**See's Candy** gift certificate — One-pound box \$15.45 (Save \$2.05). No expiration.

**"E Tickets"** — Disneyland: 1 Day Hopper Adult \$149, Child \$144. Universal Studios, buy 1 day, get "2015" FREE (3+ yrs). Valid thru 12/31/15. Blackout dates apply after first visit.

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5156 McGrath St., Suite 102 • P.O. Box 3160 • Ventura, CA 93006  
Telephone 805-289-0155 • Fax 805-658-0295 • www.farmbureauvc.com