

California: Medfly quarantine zone covers 89 square miles in Los Angeles County

Federal and State authorities have set up a quarantine zone for Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) in Sun Valley, Los Angeles, with a dozen detections of the pest made over the past month.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) confirmed a single adult Medfly in the area on August 17, and then a two additional adult Medflies were confirmed on August 30.

This triggered a new quarantine area, in conjunction with the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to apply safeguarding measures and restrictions on the interstate movement or entry into foreign trade of regulated articles from the established zone.

“Additional detections occurred subsequently and, to date, CDFA has confirmed a total of 12 adult Medflies and 55 larvae from 12 residential sites,” APHIS said.

“In cooperation with CDFA, APHIS is responding to the confirmed detections with the establishment of a new quarantine area, which encompasses approximately 89 square miles of Los Angeles County.

“APHIS is working with CDFA and the Los Angeles County Agriculture Commissioner’s office to respond to these detections following program survey, treatment, and quarantine protocols.

The CDFA said increased numbers of sterile male Medflies were being released in the area as part of an eradication effort, while properties within 200 meters of detections are being treated with an organic formulation of Spinosad to eliminate any mated females and reduce the population density of the flies.

“The flies lay their eggs in fruit, so crews will also remove fruit from trees within 100 meters of sites where larvae and multiple adult flies have been found,” the CDFA said.

“Agricultural officials are working with fruit growers, wholesalers, and retailers in the area to ensure that the infestation does not spread through commercial channels.

“Local residents and home gardeners in the quarantine zone are urged to consume homegrown produce on site and not move it from their property. These actions protect against the artificial spread of the infestation to nearby regions where it could affect California’s food supply and backyard gardens.”

The department highlighted Medflies targeted more than 250 types of fruits and vegetables, which could significantly impact the state's agricultural exports.

"Damage occurs when the female lays eggs inside the fruit. The eggs hatch into maggots and tunnel through the flesh of the fruit, making it unfit for consumption," the CDFA said.

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