Pest management fruit school

December 10–11, Wenatchee and Yakima

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How can Washington tree fruit growers build better pest management systems? That’s the question that the 2008 Washington State University Pest Management Fruit School would like to help answer. The fruit school, entitled "Growers and Advisors Working Together to Optimize Resources," will be held simultaneously in Wenatchee and Yakima on December 10 and 11, with the Yakima portion presented via video conference.

Who should attend?

This year’s fruit school was organized specifically with growers and managers in mind. Pest control is an essential aspect of delivering a quality crop and cannot be overlooked. The cost of new pesticides is significantly higher than those used in the past, and rising fuel and labor prices have further increased the total cost of applying pesticides.

Implementing a site-specific monitoring and pest control plan can result in improved pest management, decreased pesticide use—usually through fewer pesticide applications—and direct savings to the grower. Time spent developing and implementing a well-designed pest management system is a good investment.

Why now?

Regulatory changes affecting the use of older pesticides and greater scrutiny from export markets on pest infestations are forcing changes in the way that Washington tree fruit growers manage orchard pests. The old "spray on a schedule" and "generalized pest management" approaches are being replaced by site-specific pest management systems.

The transition to new pest management systems will improve farmworker safety and labor management because new pest controls are safer to humans and have shorter worker reentry intervals.

The management that is required to successfully implement a site-specific plan is more intensive and can be more expensive, at least during the transition period. However, costs can be offset by developing a site-specific plan to monitor and control pests, refine spray application timing, and improve spray coverage with better use of application equipment and management of tree architecture. The goal of this year’s fruit school is to empower growers and managers by giving them the knowledge and skills to work closely with their crop advisors to develop this type of system. Growers and managers who take the time to work with their crop advisors to develop and implement a site-specific plan can result in improved pest management decisions and realize economic savings through reduced pesticide use, better crop protection, reduced crop losses, or a combination of these factors.

The fruit school program

The fruit school will address four primary topics: the fundamentals of a well-designed pest management system; achieving and improving pest control; marketing and regulations as they impact pest control decisions; and, building capacity within the orchard operation for a better pest management system. A Grower’s Technology Economic Assessment Model (TEAM) will be used to illustrate the economic impacts in these areas and analyze the costs and benefits of making changes.

The fundamentals: It is important to understand why our pest management programs are changing. The focus will be on building a new pest management system, not just substituting a new pesticide for an old one. This session will address pest management program planning, sampling and monitoring, and spray technology.

Improving control: This session will help participants develop the skills necessary to implement a site-specific pest management system. Topics will include use of degree-day models and the WSU Decision Aid System to make better management decisions, new pesticides and how and when to use them, and how to develop and implement a site-specific pest monitoring plan.

Marketing and regulations: This session will review regulations that affect pest management decisions, discuss the growing consumer and public demand for environmental values and sustainability in agriculture, and highlight ways for fruit growers to think about these trends and begin to tap into new markets.

Building a better system: Implementing a pest management system includes a strategy...
The old "spray on a schedule" and "generalized pest management" paradigm is changing. The focus will be on building a new pest management system, not just improving the equipment and management of tree architecture. Regulatory changes affecting the use of older pesticides and greater scrutiny from export markets require human and material resources that must be allocated as they would in any other farm practice. This session will include discussions by growers, managers, and crop advisors about the resources needed and how the performance of your investment in staff and technology can be improved.

Guest speaker

Guest speaker Dr. Andrew Landers, a pesticide application technology specialist from Cornell University, will participate in both days of the fruit school, offering advice on "Improving Sprayer Calibration and Coverage" and "Improving the Quality of Your Investment: Sprayer Technology."

Thorough spray coverage is a crucial aspect of using new pesticides successfully, and making the investment to improve spray coverage will directly improve pest management performance.

Registration

The fruit school will be presented at the Confluence Technology Center in Wenatchee and linked to Yakima Valley Community College by videoconference for those who would rather not travel to Wenatchee.

Registration costs $100 for Wenatchee and $75 for Yakima. The cost includes lunch on both days as well as electronic proceedings of the 2008 WSU Fruit School on Pest Management. Registration deadline is December 5.

For information or to register, contact the Wenatchee Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center at (509) 663-8181, ext. 257, or visit the Web site at: http://pmpl.wsu.edu/fruitschool.