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California wine grapes sold for bulk market.....Page 8

WESTERN

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FARM PRESS

TIMELY, RELIABLE INFORMATION FOR CALIFORNIA-ARIZONA AGRICULTURE

Prices, competition to cut pima acreage in central Arizona

By Cary Blake
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Pima cotton's return to significance in Central Arizona with the start of the pink bollworm eradication program there was less than encouraging.

Yields were low last season when acreage almost doubled from 1,300 acres the year before to 2,200 acres for '06. It looks like low prices and high grain corn prices will quickly reverse that trend this season.

In 2006, average Pima yields totaled 1.92 bales per acre, about equal to '05 yields, according to River Co-op Gin manager Steve Straussner in Coolidge, Ariz. River Co-op is the remaining roller gin in Central Arizona ginning Extra Long Staple Pima cotton from Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal counties. The '06 increase was largely caused by the first-year pink bollworm eradication efforts in Central Arizona, Straussner said.

"Pima quality in '06 was real good, mainly 1 and 2 grades. Weather-related discoloration was really not an issue." Varieties grown were Deltapine (DP) HTO Pima, DP 744 Pima, and some public variety S7.

Straussner predicted fewer Pima acres and grower numbers in '07. He said 10 growers would likely plant Pima in '07, down from 15 growers in '06.

"2006 prices were less than what everybody hoped for and a little discouraging," Straussner said. "If Pima prices jump to \$1.10 to \$1.15, it might be worth trying. To make two bales per acre work, Arizona growers need about \$1.15."

Pima yields in Central Arizona are generally one-half bale less than Upland.



UNLESS PIMA PRICES increase to about \$1.20 per pound by spring planting, Central Arizona cotton growers Clayton Golson, left, and Greg Morrow will reduce plantings to 150 acres in '07 compared with 360 acres in '06.

Another factor marring Pima planting prospects is unavailable heat tolerant Pima varieties. Heat took a heavy toll last season.

"The seed breeding over the last 7-10 years has been for California weather and this stuff just doesn't have the heat tolerance it used to," Straussner said. "While the varieties do well in California, they do not do well here."

Unless Pima prices rebound to about \$1.20 per pound by spring planting, cotton growers Greg Morrow and Clayton Golson of Coolidge, Ariz., will reduce Pima acreage to 150 acres in '07, compared to 360 acres in '06.

The first-generation farmers own M&G Farms growing mostly cotton plus 220 acres of alfalfa and wheat on 1,600 acres.

The '07 planting breakdown - 140 acres of DP 744 and 10 "experimental" acres with Phytothen 800.

The DP 744 Pima farmed in '06 yielded two bales per acre, lower than expected due to weather-related planting delays. Yet the crop generated all grade 1 quality, 4.5-4.9 micronaire, and good fiber. '05 yields were 2.5 bales in better weather with the same seed variety. The farmers plant Pima before the short staple.

S6 and S7 showed disappointing results. Golson said, "We've never had any luck with S7. It grows off, gets too tall. You have to Pix it, and it requires more management. If you let it start growing a little too much and you don't get the plant

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This Hotel California - Strictly for black widows

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*"Welcome to the Hotel California
Such a lovely place
Plenty of room at the Hotel California
Any time of year"*

*The Eagles
Hotel California*

Proprietor: Kent Daane. Fit-tingly, Black Widow Spiders are the only guests of this Hotel California... "such a lovely place... such a lovely place."

No need for a desk register. Desk clerk Daane knows all his guests. He personally reared all 3,000 of them for a stay in this special place that ... "could be heaven or this could be hell."

California Table Grape Commission is the mortgage holder of this particular lovely place.... "You can checkout any time you like. But you can never leave!"

Daane's real job is University of California Extension specialist, biological control. His charge is to make sure his guests in this vineyard established to study the habits of black widows never reach the upper floor where there are table grape clusters.

One black widow spider in a bunch of table grapes is definitely an unwanted guest. One is one too many, and the California Table Grape Commission is funding an aggressive research effort by University of California entomologists to help growers to turn ones into zeros.

Hotel California for Black Widows is just one element of the research Daane and others are conducting on how to find and control black widow spiders, which have been found in table grape clusters in supermarket produce departments here and overseas.

A definite no-no in this country, but even more so in critical markets overseas. One-third of California table grapes are exported each season and if enough black widows are found in bunches shipped overseas, hard earned markets could be lost. This is especially true in countries where there are no black widow spiders. There these evil doers are considered invasive species to never become established.

Black widows are certainly not invasive in America where Daane estimates one-third of all households have black widows in backyards, basements or other places.

One of the big reasons homeowners and table grape growers alike do not see them is that they are nocturnal.

"The black widow spiders always come out at night in vineyards, typically starting after dusk and remaining until just before sunrise," Daane told the annual San Joaquin Valley ta-

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Black widows

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ble grape seminar in Visalia recently.

Daane told 300 growers and PCAs there they could use that little bit of research information to ensure that black widows do not get a one-way ticket out of a vineyard on a table grape bunch. Early morning or late evening may be the best time to treat with insecticides.

Fortunately, said Daane, there is an array of effective insecticides for control of black widows.

In direct contact studies, Danitol, Lorsban and Lanate "provided excellent control of adult black widows with 100 percent mortality one day after treatment."

However, Applaud, Provado, Agrimek and Omite

had little or no impact.

Of the effective material, only Danitol and Lorsban provided "residual control," said Daane. This is where spiders died after contact with treated bark. Danitol was also "very effective" against immature black widows, while Lorsban had less impact.

Most black widows (40-60 percent) in vineyards with known black widow problems were found near the trunk base with fewer than 8 percent found in the canopy and clusters. Fewer than 1 percent were actually found in clusters, according to Daane.

Black widows like to spin webs in areas between grapestakes and the vine and in irrigation standpipes. They love milk cartons used to protect young vines. Daane suggests removing the protective milk cartons as soon as practical. In one vineyard

where the cartons were removed, spider populations quickly declined.

Finding black widow webs is easier than finding spiders. Daane suggests destroying webs around the base and other areas of the vine where they are found before applying an insecticide. Three to five days after treatment return to those sites — he suggests 50 webs — and see if the webs have been rebuilt. If the black widows are still alive, the webs will be built back in three to five days.

Black widows are active year-round, even in when temperatures are freezing or near freezing. Nighttime applications in the winter when they are slow moving may be the best time to reduce the problem with pesticide applications.

Both mature and immature black widow stages are present year-round. Spiderlings are most common from May through October, typically peaking in May and June. Spiderlings were always found on webs at the base of the vine. Adult female black widows produce egg sacs from April through September.

Found at harvest

"Unfortunately, the largest number of black widows are found during the harvest months of August through November," Daane noted. Fall is also when 50 percent of the state's table grapes move to market.

Daane says the late season movement into canopy and clusters could be spiders looking for prey. "This will be especially true in vineyard systems with dense overhead canopies that block growth of plant materials on the vineyard floor, which also reduces the potential prey near the ground and away from the grape clusters," he said.

As a biological control specialist, Daane is always looking for beneficial insects/predators. The best biological control for black widow spiders is black widow spiders. They eat their young.

Welcome to Hotel California.

If you snooze, you may lose in controlling vine mealybug

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Vine mealybug must be a serious California grape pest if the powers at the UC Kearney Ag Center in Parlier, Calif., will not let university IPM specialist Walt Bentley rear vine mealybug in a greenhouse, but will let his peer Kent Daane establish a black widow spider Disneyland vineyard on the station.

Bentley has been one of the point researchers on the vine mealybug and wanted to test materials in a Kearney greenhouse. Station managers told him he could rear grape mealybug in the greenhouse, but not vine mealybug. Too dangerous to other things in the greenhouse.

Wine grape growers and table grape growers have been aggressively battling a growing vine mealybug problem in the state. Unfortunately, Bentley told those at the annual table grape seminar in Visalia, Calif., recently some raisin growers are

waiting until there is a serious problem to deal with the vine mealybug.

Waiting until it gets bad or ignoring it can result in crawler numbers of 800 per spur like Bentley found last year in a raisin vineyard in Del Rey, Calif. Numbers like that foretell a serious economic battle to control the pest that will serve as an infection point for neighboring vineyards.

Left alone, numbers like that can heavily coat grapes with honeydew and ruin the fruit; reduce sugar levels at harvest and spread diseases like leaf roll virus, Bentley told growers and pest control advisers at the table grape conference sponsored by the California Table Grape Commission and the UC Cooperative Extension.

Be ever diligent for what has become public enemy No. 1 for California grape growers, he warned. Alert workers to be on the lookout for tiny white spots on leaves, a sure sign of vine mealybug. That is also a sure way to tell a grower has a resident populations of grape or vine mealybug.

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