

Introducing KiwiNet

Latest fruit fly find provides a real test for industry response



It couldn't have come at a worse time – and yet the discovery of yet another Queensland fruit fly in the Auckland suburb of Grey Lynn recently provided an opportunity to deploy an innovative new group.

As kiwifruit growers prepared for their upcoming harvest, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) discovered a single male fruit fly in a trap. Identified as the biggest biosecurity risk to the kiwifruit industry's billion-dollar export market, the third find in just thirteen months once again put the industry on high alert.

The discovery also triggered KVH to immediately engage KiwiNet.

KiwiNet is made up of representatives from across the wider industry and is responsible for coordinating the deployment of industry resources into a biosecurity response. KiwiNet was established in December last year as part of industry's commitment to readiness and response planning under Government Industry Agreements (GIA).

Within two days of the late-February notification, eight people from the kiwifruit industry were heading to Auckland to help MPI and AsureQuality in the field with trapping, monitoring and surveillance.

A day later, that number more than doubled, with 20 industry people on the ground being inducted and trained to start work.

Peter Mourits, KVH operations manager, is the KiwiNet response coordinator and has been working with post harvest to quickly populate rosters and ensure the right people were being deployed into the field.

"We currently have more than 25 industry people working as part of the wider response team made up of around 180 people," Peter told the *New Zealand Kiwifruit Journal*, as this edition went to press. "Most of these people are working within the surveillance team which includes trapping, fruit collection and surveying. A small number have also been deployed into the movement controls work stream to ensure the public are adhering to the fruit movement restrictions put in place by MPI.

"We are also likely to deploy industry resources into other areas of the response to provide industry specific knowledge and develop capability.

"We've been really pleased with the level of support and engagement from across the industry, and in particular the industry's response to provide people to be trained

and deployed as fruit fly trappers on an ongoing basis."

Within days of the initial find, MPI announced further fruit flies were found within close proximity of the first location, including a female fruit fly and larvae. This confirmed a small, isolated breeding population had established and resulted in MPI escalating the response to 'Response Level 2'.

"The escalation to level two meant the response was no longer a potentially 14-day operation. As it's likely to continue for several months, the need for ongoing resources and support will continue.

"As we move closer to harvest, providing the same level of support will obviously reduce as people gear up to put all their resources into kiwifruit harvest. However, we expect other horticultural industries will be able to increase their contribution."

KiwiNet is part of the National Biosecurity Capability Network (NBCN), which is New Zealand's field capability team deployed during a biosecurity response. It is a joint initiative between MPI and AsureQuality and is made up of more than 120 organizations, which have agreed to commit their skills and resources. ■