BMSB risk update – April 2020

The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) is considered one of the greatest biosecurity threats to the kiwifruit industry, and many other horticultural industries. Its entry and establishment in New Zealand would result in significant production and lifestyle impacts.

BMSB is native to parts of Asia but has been invading North America and Europe over recent years. It has also been detected in Chile.

Since the start of the high-risk period 1 September 2019:

- There have been 57 live BMSB finds, about a quarter of what was found (212) at this time last season.
- Most of the bugs have been found in people’s personal effects/goods, mostly originating in the USA and Italy.

During the four weeks from 19 March to 17 April 2020:

- There were no detections of BMSB (either at the border, or post-border).
- There were 230 calls to the 0800 pest and disease hotline in March about potential stink bug finds.

It is important to remain vigilant and keep watch. The earlier we find an unwanted bug, the greater the chance of successful eradication.

What has been done this season to reduce the risk?

- Proactive initiatives are underway by Biosecurity New Zealand and Government Industry Agreement (GIA) partners to manage the risk of BMSB crossing our borders. As with previous stink bug seasons, there is increased surveillance and inspection of arriving ships and cargo from countries with established stink bug populations.

- Biosecurity New Zealand’s rules for this stink bug season require offshore treatment of imported vehicles, machinery, and parts from 33 identified risk countries, and all sea containers from Italy. In the past, only uncontainerised vehicle cargo from risk countries required treatment before arriving in New Zealand. These rules are being revised to include new countries and lessons learnt from this season and are expected to be released for public consultation in May.

- Reporting has shown that 99% of containers treated offshore this season have been compliant - with no live BMSB detected – indicating that risk is being well managed by offshore treatments.

- Suppliers where BMSB have been found in the past in large numbers are targeted by Biosecurity New Zealand, who increase inspections of the importers who receive their goods. A recent review has found offshore safe-
guarding and treatments for these high-risk suppliers have been effective, with no live BMSB found this season.

- The post-border national surveillance programme that was piloted at 25 sites last season has been expanded to around 80 sites and 160 traps (two traps at each site). The programme has been established to provide early warning of incursions and consists of monitoring for BMSB presence using lure traps on or near specific hosts at high-risk sites (based on previous detections over the past five years, and volumes of high-risk consignments from high-risk countries) throughout the country.

- There have been just over 2000 trap and surrounding vegetation inspections, with 551 samples submitted for testing. All except one have been negative for BMSB.

- That one BMSB find resulted in an investigation – including surveillance – and was detailed in the KVH BMSB risk update for March (a female bug was discovered near a surveillance trap at a Transitional Facility in Auckland. Furniture from Italy had been unloaded at the facility the day before). There were no further bugs found during the investigation.

Industry preparedness

- As the New Zealand response to Covid-19 continues, both the kiwifruit industry and biosecurity have been deemed essential services at alert levels 3 and 4. This means that all parts of the industry, including KVH, continue to operate at this stage, albeit with enhanced conditions that include strict regulation and hygiene protocols. Biosecurity activity continues at the border and post-border and things like ongoing surveillance programmes, testing and trapping activities continue (with appropriate measures in place to protect people).

- KVH has developed a new guide for growers, detailing the likely options for on-orchard management of BMSB should it establish here. The guide is split into several different sections and covers likely impacts to fruit and orchards, expected seasonal timing of impacts, control tools such as exclusion netting and areas of research underway. The guide is available on the KVH website here.

- KVH is co-funding a nationwide education and awareness campaign with government and other groups across horticulture. This includes print, social media, on-demand TV advertising, and distribution of awareness material.