

KiwiNet: helping fight fruit flies

For most of 2019, KiwiNet took part in the Auckland fruit fly responses. Here, network member Nory Estal tells us about her time on the frontline.

Nory is a Quality and Compliance Officer at Orangewood in Kerikeri. Orangewood is a kiwifruit post-harvest and orchard management company that has been operating since 1983.

When I got to Auckland and started working on the fruit fly response I knew right away that the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), and the operational people who help them, were very serious about their programme of work.

There are a lot of people involved in a big response. Several teams were out in the field to help with all sorts of different activities - surveying, installing baits, collecting fruit from properties, analysing fruit in the lab, and making their way around affected homes to provide help and information so that residents could help support the response.

Before heading out each day there was a team meeting to update everyone on progress and reiterate things like confidentiality of people's information, and what an Authorised Person under the Biosecurity Act can and can't do. Communication like this was very important because it made sure everyone had the same understanding of rules and expectations for the response.

At the daily meetings we also discussed any events or incidents from the day before and what had been done since then to rectify or improve any issues. We were reminded about safety issues and traffic management too. I liked these meetings because they showed how much people cared about our health and safety, and it made me feel looked after.

What I learnt more than anything else is that working with diverse cultures, communicating, and showing leadership are all essential attributes if you want to be on a response. There are all sorts of people on the team - some are trained and experienced, others are new to responses and perhaps from other countries, and some are more used to the long days than others - but everyone who is dedicated can learn quickly what to do, and make a big difference.

Personally, I also really enjoyed learning more about fruit flies and biosecurity.

My advice to anyone taking part for the first time is to make the most of it - enjoy meeting people from different walks of life, be willing to learn (no experience is required), work hard, and never underestimate how helpful it is to attend regular response briefings and meetings.



Nory Estal (left) and her colleague, Carol Smart from Orangewood

