

FRUIT FLY STUDENT FACT SHEET (Copymaster)

Mediterranean Fruit Fly (or Medfly for short) is one of the most serious and destructive horticultural pests in the world. Medfly can cause serious damage to over 250 varieties of fruit and vegetables and nuts. Fruit, vegetables and nuts such as avocado, all citrus fruits like oranges, feijoa, grapes, peppers, persimmon, pip fruit such as apples and pears, stone fruit such as plums and peaches and walnuts can all be attacked and ruined by Medfly. The serious damage is caused by the female fly laying eggs under the skin of the ripening fruit, vegetables or nuts. These hatch into maggots, which tunnel through the flesh of the plant. This causes it to rot and no one wants to eat fruit, vegetables or nuts that are rotten or are crawling with maggots. Medfly can also live on several ornamental trees and weeds such as monkey apple, black nightshade and Jerusalem cherry.

Medflies are brightly coloured, with a black and yellowish body with dark bands on the wings. They are smaller than the common house fly – 4-5mm. The maggots (larvae) are pale-coloured and grow up to about 10mm long. The maggots cause the damage, eating the fruit, making it soft and squashy and unfit for people to eat. The small fly frequently found around rotting fruit in fruit bowls is not Medfly, or a fruit fly at all – it is a vinegar fly.

Medfly came from West Africa and soon spread to North and South Africa, then to Europe, the Middle East, Australia, South America, USA, including Hawaii. Queensland fruit fly is another very destructive pest that causes serious damage in Australia – especially Queensland, where millions of dollars are spent trying to control it. Medfly can move around the world in a matter of hours. The most common way this happens is by planes carrying the maggots in fruit or vegetables of a passenger's baggage. This is why air travellers are not allowed to bring any fruit or vegetables into New Zealand. Medfly is also the most dangerous fruit fly to have in New Zealand because it is able to adjust to our cooler climate.

New Zealand is free of Medfly and this gives New Zealand a huge export advantage over those countries that have Medfly. If Medfly or Queensland fruit fly ever became established in New Zealand, countries that we trade with around the world would severely restrict access for our horticultural products such as fruit and vegetables. This could mean complete bans by some countries. Growers would have to develop expensive programmes to monitor and manage this pest. This is very serious as we sell these products overseas for about \$2 billion per year and we would have to prove that we had eradicated it (got rid of it) before they would buy our products again. As well as this, thousands of people who are involved in horticulture and supporting horticulture could lose their jobs. Getting rid of fruit fly is also very expensive and news reports overseas could be very bad for our 'clean and green' image that attracts tourists to our country.

In New Zealand we keep a sharp lookout for Medfly and other harmful fruit flies by having special traps in our main centres, ports and international airports where fruit fly could enter. In 1996 Medfly was found in traps (and later in fruit) at Mt Roskill in Auckland and we had to have a long and expensive programme to get rid of it. Because of this, many overseas countries placed restrictions on New Zealand fruit from 1-5 years, and some even banned New Zealand fruit. For the year that ended in March 2009, there were 7 times when Medfly was found in baggage of travellers coming to New Zealand – so we have to always be on guard to prevent it becoming established.

Many tourists coming to New Zealand do not know of the dangers to our country from Medfly, and many New Zealanders coming home from an overseas holiday (where harmful fruit fly is found) also do not realise just how serious it is. MAF Biosecurity New Zealand wants us to help make sure that our families and people in our communities know of the dangers, and realise the harm that can be caused by bringing in 'just an orange or apple' in their baggage. It could very easily have maggot eggs in it and be the piece of fruit that gets Medfly or Queensland fruit fly established in New Zealand.

To find out more about Medfly visit these websites:

- <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/mediterranean-fruit-fly>
- http://entnem.ufl.edu/creatures/fruit/mediterranean_fruit_fly.htm
- <http://www.invasive.org/species/subject.cfm?sub=4649>



Mediterranean Fruit Fly



Queensland Fruit Fly

