

Spotted Wing Drosophila

Spotted Wing Drosophila is a fruit fly which lays eggs inside soft and stone fruit crops such as cherries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants. The larva eats and destroys the developing fruit from the inside. The fly attacks sound fruit and might only be noticed when harvesting ripe fruit.

First seen in the UK in 2012, last year my cherry crop was ruined by this fly. Commercial growers worldwide are very concerned about the damage this fly causes.

Traps or lures to check for the presence of the fruit fly can be hung in hedgerows or nearby crops likely to be damaged. This will not eliminate the flies but can warn you of its presence. Do this in early May through to June. (see below for how to make a trap)

To protect your crop, cover in micromesh or fleece to prevent flies reaching the crop. The cover should be complete or flies will get under the cover.

Insecticides suitable for food crops can be used following manufacturer's instructions. Some products that can be used on a range of fruit are natural pyrethrum/pyrethrins (e.g. Bug Clear Gun for Fruit & Veg, Defenders Bug Killer), deltamethrin (e.g. Bayer Provado Ultimate Fruit and Vegetable Bug Killer, Bayer Sprayday Greenfly Killer), lambda-cyhalothrin (e.g. Westland Resolva Bug Killer) or acetamiprid (e.g. Bug Clear Ultra).
Ref: RHS website

To make a trap or lure:

Use a 1 litre plastic milk bottle or water bottle with its lid

Drill a series of 3/16 inch holes in the sides of the bottle

Put 3cm depth of apple cider vinegar and a drop of unscented washing up liquid into the bottle

Hang the bottle near but not in the fruit likely to be affected, not in direct sunshine at about 1m height. Allow good access by clearing vegetation around the trap.

After 1 week, empty the contents into a sieve, allow to dry and check trapped flies for SWD.

The male fly has darker spots on its wing tips. **Look on line for identifying pictures.**

Refill the bottle and repeat the process.

Scrupulous hygiene is very important to contain the spread of SWD. Discarding fruits with SWD on open compost heaps or shallow burial must be avoided, as this enables SWD to reproduce, feed and over-winter.

Collect all affected fruits leaving none on the ground. Put into heavy duty black plastic bags, seal and leave in a sunny place for a week or more. The warmth and anaerobic conditions will cause fermentation to take place killing the larvae and any flies.

To dispose of the contents, dig into soil where it will degrade. Dig deep enough to avoid attracting fruit flies to the waste thus feeding them.

Google "Spotted Wing Drosophila" for identification and more information.