

## Nets prove effective in fruit fly control

Key fruit crops such as low chill stone fruit, lychees, longans and persimmons in the subtropical regions of Australia are growth industries well placed to take advantage of potentially lucrative export markets. Major threats to these industries are the Queensland fruit fly and other insect pests.



Native to Australia and found on most of the country's east coast, the Queensland fruit fly causes crop losses as its larvae are laid in the flesh of the fruit, causing premature ripening and rotting. It also causes problems with access to markets due to strict quarantine requirements. In the past, fruit fly control has relied heavily on the use of chemicals, but increasing consumer and environmental concern about chemical residue in fruit crops has led the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) to research non-chemical alternatives.

Researchers from DPI&F investigated the use of exclusion netting to control fruit fly and other larger insects. Netting has increasingly been used to protect crops from birds, bats and environmental damage, but there has been limited use of this control method for insect pests. The researchers also faced the challenge of maintaining light, pollination and temperature at optimum levels under the netting.

The results speak for themselves. In stone fruit, a highly susceptible crop, the netting proved to be highly effective. Fruit flies and other larger insect pests were excluded. As well as being almost completely chemical free, the quality of the fruit was improved significantly. As a direct result of the research, there has been a rapid increase in the adoption of netting for a variety of crops. DPI&F is now working to have exclusion netting approved as a nationally and internationally recognised quarantine treatment for fruit flies.

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<http://www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/horticulture/14832.html>