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## **Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner Releases Holiday Reminder – Stop the Spread of Fruit Flies**

EL CENTRO, CA – on December 5, 2023, the Oriental Fruit Fly quarantine expanded in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. It is now encompassing 553 square miles predominantly in residential areas. Further, there are currently seven distinct areas in California that are under quarantine for various species of fruit flies. These quarantines are rapidly expanding, and eradication efforts have not yet gained control over most of these infestations. Local agricultural and backyard production of many fruits and vegetables would be seriously affected by the introduction of one of these pests.

With this in mind, we want to urge holiday travelers and gift-givers to help stop the spread. The sharing of homegrown fruits and vegetables presents a serious risk of spreading fruit fly maggots. You may not notice these pests immediately, because they lay their eggs inside the fruits/vegetables.

Imperial County does not currently have any exotic fruit fly infestations or quarantines. We know this because the Agricultural Commissioner, in concert with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), monitors the county with a network of traps. We maintain over 500 traps year-round for exotic fruit flies, most of which are on residential properties with fruit fly host plants.

Here is what you can do to help:

- Don't pack a pest. When traveling, do not bring home fresh fruits, vegetables, and plants. These can carry pests that can easily get introduced into the environment.
- If you find an insect pest in your fruits and vegetables, you can report it to the CDFA Pest Hotline at 1-800-491-1899 or dispose of it by double bagging and placing it in the garbage. Composting or placing infested produce in green waste bins can spread pests.
- When asked, cooperate with Agricultural Commissioner staff to allow us to place traps on your property.



*Oriental Fruit Fly, Image courtesy of CDFA*