

28 February 2020

## Fruit fly tree removal program to commence

Moirā Shire Council will remove a large number of ornamental fruit trees from nature strips, reserves and parks, primarily in Cobram, after receiving funding via Agriculture Victoria's Regional Action Plan Grant 2019-2020.

Mayor Libro Mustica said Queensland fruit fly (QFF) were a serious pest inflicting millions of dollars damage for horticulture Australia-wide as well as affecting production and trade opportunities locally.

"The insect causes significant damage to fruit crops by 'stinging' the fruit and then infecting them with larvae and ornamental fruit trees, while unpalatable to humans, are hosts for QFF," Cr Mustica said.

"And by being hosts for QFF, they are supporting the general population of fruit flies which can then invade and damage commercial orchards.

"The Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) Region produces more than 455,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables, which are susceptible to fruit fly, and generates \$777M in annual regional production plus \$300M in export growth.

"In terms of employment, it is estimated there will be 440 additional jobs in the GMV over the next three years.

"In Moira Shire alone, horticulture contributes a vital \$113M to our economy and Council is working closely with the GMV Regional Fruit Fly Project (FF Project) to ensure the continued growth of our horticulture industry."

The FF Project is a partnership between Agriculture Victoria, Fruit Growers Victoria, Cobram and District Fruit Growers Association, Lions International District 201V6 and Moira, Campaspe, Shepparton, Strathbogie and Berrigan shires.

"Agriculture Victoria has provided \$80,000 to remove the QFF host plants from nature strips, reserves and parks with this removal focussing on locations closest to horticultural areas," Cr Mustica said.



“Residents may see Council staff and contractors removing trees in Cobram on both residential and rural roads in coming weeks.

“The work will continue over several months starting in Cobram, the hub of our fruit industry, and then progressing throughout the municipality as required.

“These trees will be replaced with appropriate non-host trees, in consultation with residents and in line with Council’s tree replacement program.

“Council is very grateful for Agriculture Victoria’s support in mitigating fruit fly in Moira Shire and in protecting our horticultural industry.”

Cr Mustica said there would be direct consultation with residents in the streets which are ear-marked for tree removal, to choose which replacement trees they would like to see planted.

“Details will be sent shortly to those residents and home owners regarding this consultation,” he said.

Agriculture Victoria’s Regional Action Plan recognises fruit fly management is a shared responsibility.

The five-year state-wide Action Plan focuses on three areas for strengthening fruit fly management:

- State and regional coordination and collaboration
- Improved fruit fly management in commercial orchards and communities
- Improved access to intrastate, interstate and international market access and trade opportunities

The Action Plan can be found on the Agriculture Victoria website [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au).