

# Master Food Educators Take The IPM Train

NEWARK, Del. — What does IPM, integrated pest management, have to do with you and me? The answer is — a lot!

IPM is a system of controlling agricultural pests, including insects, rodents, weeds and diseases.

University of Delaware Cooperative Extension recently led several Master Food Educators, who are trained extension volunteers, on a one-day tour of farms, greenhouses, and research facilities. The purpose: to familiarize them with the concept of IPM and to let them see a side of production agriculture that most people aren't privy to.

"So much goes into food production that the average consumer never sees," said Dr. Sue Snider, extension food and nutrition specialist. Snider, who coordinates the training of Master Food Educators, planned the IPM tour with Joanne Whalen, IPM specialist; Marty Spellman, IPM associate; and Carl Davis, New Castle County agricultural agent.

"We felt it was important for the Master Food Educators to have a deeper understanding of the behind-the-scenes aspects of food production," Snider said. "IPM was a good choice because

of its potential direct effect on consumers."

IPM, which uses multiple strategies to control pests, has a number of beneficial results that can directly affect the consumer. Benefits can include a more abundant food supply, a safer food supply because of reduced chemical controls, and reduced production costs for farmers resulting in reduced food prices for consumers.

Whalen says that IPM controls fall into the broad categories of biological, mechanical, cultural, and chemical. Cultural controls include crop rotation and planting dates. Use of beneficial insects falls under the umbrella of biological control. Plowing under weeds is an example of mechanical control. And monitoring the pest population is essential to determine if chemical control is needed.

Constant vigilance and painstaking attention to detail is required to monitor pest populations. Cooperative extension hires IPM scouts to help with the monitoring process during the growing season.

In the war against pests, scouts

carry a seemingly innocuous arsenal of equipment including magnifying glasses, nets, small jars and notebooks. These tools are used to examine plants, collect specimens and record the pest population level in a given field. Examining leaves with a magnifying glass, shaking insects into sheets, or sweeping them into nets

are all labor-intensive techniques that can save bundles of money and gallons of chemicals that would be used unnecessarily on food crops.

"You appreciate food more when you realize all the work that goes into it," said Snider. "On the tour, our Master Food Educators

had an opportunity to examine young cabbage plants for any evidence of insect invasion. And along with an appreciation for the hard work involved, they came away with a better understanding of the food industry and the management techniques that go into ensuring a safe food supply."

## No Gypsy Moth Suppression in 1997

YORK (York Co.) — There is no gypsy moth suppression program planned for York County in 1997.

The gypsy moth population is low due to natural controls and in the entomophaga maimeiga fungus. There was a good potential for a major outbreak in the county, which did not occur due to entomophaga/natural causes.

This fungus affects the gypsy moth in the caterpillar stage. Moisture is critical for disease development and the rains during the larval stage is May and June made for ideal conditions.

The gypsy moth populations were impacted not only in York, but statewide as well as all of the North East. The potential existed

for 200,000+ acres of defoliation (30% of tree's leaves eaten by the caterpillars) statewide.

Actual defoliation was 9,027 acres which is the lowest state total since 1979. York County experienced 18 acres of defoliation as compared to 3,021 acres in 1995.

The entomophaga fungus is native to Asia and was first found in Pennsylvania in 1989. The first evidence of the fungus in York County was in 1994.

As a result of egg mass surveys conducted in York County, low to no gypsy moth population should be evident in 1997.

These egg masses are deposited by adults in July and hatch into

caterpillars the following spring. Studies show that there needs to be at least 250 healthy egg masses per acre to cause damaging levels of defoliation (i.e. 30%+).

That also is the minimum requirement for spray purposes. No area of the county even approaches that level.

This year only 15 requests for egg mass surveys were received by this office. That compares to 710 in 1995.

The county gypsy moth coordinator and DEP Bureau of Forestry continues to monitor the population and will offer the program in the future if and when gypsy moth populations warrant.

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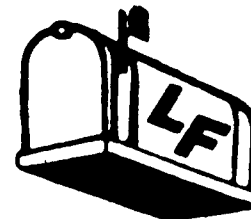
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