Moratorium

(continued fFrom Page A1)

"We need the help of everyone in the quarantine zone backyard fruit growers, homeowners, renters, businesses, and commercial growers — to help eradicate this fruit tree disease so that the huge economic losses being experienced by the fruit industry are not in vain," Hayes said.

"Plum pox virus is an extremely serious threat to the stone fruit industry of Pennsylvania, and it is our goal at the Department of Agriculture to help lead the fight to eradicate this virus. The planting of plum pox virus-susceptible trees and shrubs anywhere in the quarantine area would make additional host material available for virus infection and jeopardize the opportunity to eradicate the virus."

The moratorium on planting strengthens the quarantine by stopping all planting of potential hosts in the quarantine area and will help the Department of Agriculture conduct a more effective survey in locating infected trees.

Detection of the plum pox virus in trees can take years. The survey will need to continue for several years to make sure that trees testing negative last year are not actually harboring the virus. The addition of more trees during this process complicates the survey, adds cost, and then adds to the number of times property owners must be contacted by surveyors.

The moratorium will help speed the lifting of the quarantine by helping the commonwealth to reach plum pox-free status. Once that goal is reached, growers and homeowners can resume planting of stone fruit trees without the threat of plum pox virus.

Commercial growers have destroyed nearly 900 acres of infected and exposed trees to help eradicate the plum pox virus.

Discovered in Adams County in September 1999, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture conducted extensive surveys and tests to establish a quarantine area.

Plum pox virus causes a disease in stone fruit, such as peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, and related ornamental trees in the genus Prunus. These varieties and hybrids are hosts of the virus strain present in Pennsylvania. Other hosts include many ornamental plants such as the purple leaf plum, sand cherry, flowering almond, and flowering peach.

Aphids spread the virus from infected to healthy trees. This viral disease, known as sharka,

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is a limited factor for stone fruit production in areas of the world where it occurs. Sharka does not have an effect on animals or

When sharka was identified in Pennsylvania, it triggered surveys of commercial fruit tree orchards across the commonwealth and other fruit-growing areas in the U.S. and Canada. Surveys also were conducted for susceptible trees on residential properties in the area were sharka was discovered in orchards.

The survey in the U.S. concluded that the virus is confined to a relatively small area in the northern part of Adams County and across the border in Cumberland County, establishing the plum pox virus quarantine zone. The quarantine prohibits the movement of susceptible trees and propagation material within or out of the quarantine area.

Pennsylvania has invested more than \$5.1 million to eradicate the plum pox virus and indemnify farmers.

If there are any questions about the moratorium or plum pox virus, contact the Department of Agriculture at (717) 772-5203.

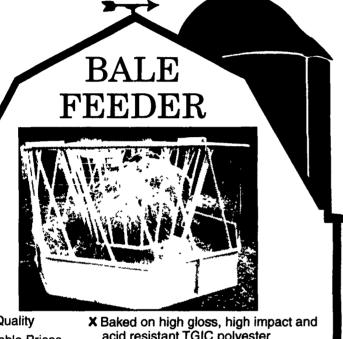
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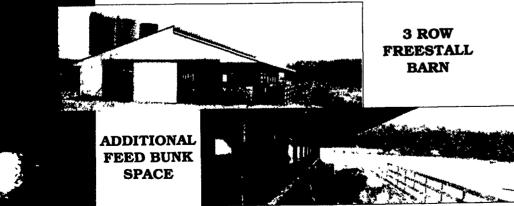
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