

Christmas Tree Scouting

Report #3 – 4/8/09

Weekly newsletter compiled by Sarah Pickel, PA Department of Agriculture

This week's report includes scouting information from: Steve Derstine (JC Hill Tree Farm), Jim Fogarty (Halabura Tree Farm), Kyle Halabura (Halabura Tree Farm), Galen May (Pine View Haven Christmas Trees), Karen Najda (PDA), Susan Newhart (Arcadia Trees), Brian Schildt (PSU) and Cathy Thomas (PDA).

Since the last report, there has been some white pine weevil activity reported. White pine weevils were found in several traps in New Ringgold, Schuylkill County on Thursday, 4/2 and Friday, 4/3 at 20 – 22.5 Growing Degree Days. They were also found on Sunday, 4/5. The presence of weevils in the trap corresponded to an increase in soil temperature underneath the trees to temperatures above 50°. No other weevil catches were reported from other locations being monitored. In Susquehanna County, there has only been 8 GDD recorded, so for the northern



Figure 1: Pales Weevil (L), White Pine Weevil (R) [Gerald J. Lenhard, Buawood.org]

portions of the state, weevil emergence may be another week away. To distinguish these weevils from others found in the traps, growers should look for a mottled brown weevil with white spots that will measure <1cm. [Figure 1] The grower in Schuylkill County will be making an insecticide application on Thursday, 4/9. The recommended treatment time is 7-10 days after weevils are detected. Because temperatures had dropped over the weekend and continued to remain low throughout the beginning of this week, weevil activity may

have been slowed down. If growers have had weevil damage in past seasons, but have not found weevils in their traps, then monitoring of white pine and Colorado blue, Norway and Serbian spruce blocks for damage to the leaders is recommended. For a listing of appropriate pesticide product registered in Pennsylvania, go to <http://ctrees.cas.psu.edu> and select 2009 Insecticides and Miticides for Christmas Tree Pests.

The growing degree day range for Pales weevil is 25-100. [Figure 1] These weevils were also found in the traps in Schuylkill

County. This can be a pest of concern for growers of hard pines and can also cause damage to white pine. The recognizable symptom caused by this wood-chewing pest is a browning or flagging of lateral



Figure 2: Pales Weevil damage on White Pine [Sandy Gardosik]

branches of the tree. [Figure 2] To prevent this pest from reproducing and becoming a problem, completely remove scotch pine stumps from the fields or treat with a registered insecticide.

The eggs of spruce spider mites have not begun to hatch yet in Adams, Franklin, Schuylkill or York

Counties. Growers should be monitoring for egg hatch as the weather begins to warm up.

Trees that had damage last season will show a



Figure 3: Spruce Spider Mite eggs [Sandy Gardosik]

yellowing or browning of the needles beginning near the stems. The eggs will be found on the underside of the twigs, at the bases of the needles. [Figure 3] A simple way to check for egg hatch is to hold a white paper underneath a branch and tap the branch to dislodge the eggs. If the tiny red specks begin to move, the mites have hatched. A hand lens is a valuable tool when looking for this.

In Adams, Cumberland, Schuylkill, and York Counties, populations of Eriophyid mites were found to be almost completely hatched from the eggs on Colorado blue, Noway and white spruce, Douglas fir and white pine. It can also be a problem on hemlocks, so growers of this tree should be monitoring. This rust mite will begin feeding on the plant juices and causing discoloration of the foliage. Growers can treat now with horticultural oil (not on blue spruce) or registered miticides.

Growers who have had problems in previous seasons with

Douglas fir needle midge, a fly-like pest which causes galls to form within the needles, [Figure 4] will want to watch for this pest as the buds of Douglas fir begin to swell. Another monitoring tool that could be useful to these growers is an emergence trap. This simple trap constructed of a



Figure 4: Galls from Douglas fir needle midge [Sandy Gardosik]

cardboard box and clear plastic jar, captures the adult midges as they emerge from the soil beneath the trees. Directions for construction of these traps can be found at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/ec/ec1373-e.pdf>. The chemical control for this pest should be applied very close to emergence.

The next scouting report will be available on Wednesday, April 15th.