

CMS PDA trials very successful

Over the past year, Fruitfed Supplies' Crop Monitoring Services has been trialling the use of handheld computers, or PDAs, by representatives and CMS staff in the field.

The CMS PDA pilot programme has involved clients and staff from Hawke's Bay and Manawatu, and all involved are enthusiastic about the benefits of utilising current telecommunications technology and custom-built software to speed up the collection and recording of monitoring data and the resulting improvements in the timeliness of spray recommendation reports being available for on-farm use. Facts talks to some of those involved with the PDA trials.

PDA aids Mr Apple's trap monitoring

One aspect of the Crop Monitoring Services' PDA trial involved making a PDA available to Mr Apple New Zealand Ltd for use by their own staff when collecting pheromone trap data.

Ian Annan manages Te Papa orchard in central Hawkes Bay, one of the largest of Mr Apple's 14 Hawke's Bay orchards at 104ha with 200,000 trees producing over 350,000 cartons every season.

"One of the best things about the PDA trial was that I hardly had to be involved at all!" comments Ian who arranged that one staff member would collect codling moth and leaf roller trap counts at Te Papa and another at Mr Apple's Pacific orchard nearby.

"Surprisingly, people who didn't have a lot of computer skills could use the PDA. We still collected the counts in hard copy form then entered the data into the PDA back in the office.

"I think you want hard copies as well in case something goes wrong; you've got something to refer to. There's so much relying on these monitoring protocols; if you're one insect over, it can cost you a huge sum of money. It doesn't take much to get one input wrong, think you're over threshold and go out to spray..."

Ian says within 15 minutes of the full trap counts being sent via the PDA, the collated report was emailed back. "The great thing is it worked every time, without fail."

Jimmy Bowden, the CMS coordinator who initiated the trial with Mr Apple, says the automated reporting process worked exceptionally well. "This was a very important part of the trial; to demonstrate the speed with which data from 66 traps could be collated, assessed against predetermined thresholds and an accurate report returned to the grower in the specified timeframe."

With the trap counts being taken in the morning, data sent and report returned promptly, Ian had access to information necessary for resource allocation the following day.

"It's not that time-critical, but if there's the threat of rain, then the extra time means we can get staff, sprayers and product ready to go for the right spray window. We've just had our third EUREP-GAP audit and flew through it. The trap monitoring report gave us everything we needed in one report, which is great," concludes Ian.



Jimmy Bowden, CMS coordinator for the eastern region, and Mr Apple's Te Papa orchard manager Ian Annan review the use of the PDA for pheromone trap count data collection.

In this issue we look at:

- ✓ Best practise for seasonal pruning
- ✓ Dacthal tough on weeds, not onions
- ✓ Nemasys knock sciarid at Jornas

Prompt recommendations of value to Easton Agriculture

The father and son team of Ian and Jason Easton runs an award-winning mixed cropping, sheep and beef farm in Shannon and the pair has found real value in the improved timeliness of monitoring data and spray recommendations afforded by this season's PDA trial which involves their Fruitfed Supplies representative Claire Mills.

As the branch manager for both the Palmerston North and Levin Fruitfed Supplies stores, as well as looking after her own clients, Claire is naturally on the road many hours each day.

"Basically, as soon as the monitoring reports for the Easton's potato and onion blocks are collated and emailed to me, I can access that information via the PDA wherever I am and complete the spray recommendations report, then email it straight to Jason," says Claire.

The PDA software is an extension of the custom-made Tracit database software, developed by CMS in conjunction with Muddy Boots for Fruitfed Supplies.

One of the key features developed for the PDA application for field representatives like Claire is a database of the plant protection products, which means Claire can use a simple pull-down menu to select the product and rates she recommends Easton Agriculture applies in response to the monitoring data.

"Early in the season it's particularly important we have this information from Claire quickly," says Jason. "Weed pressure in onions and the relatively small spray window means that the sooner we get our spray recommendations, the sooner we can plan what needs to be done and when."

Jason has his own PDA so can access Claire's emailed recommendations while out working on the farm. "Back in the office we can print the monitoring results and recommendations and file everything for our EUREP-GAP assessment. Claire's reports detail the targeted weed or pest, like thrips, against the industry thresholds so the spray applications are justified. I just take the printed reports and tick off what's been done, then enter all this data in our block management software programme called Computer Concepts Rural Solutions, which collates details such as the weed density to provide a history to help with next year's preparation."

"Essentially, having Claire use the PDA has meant improved speed of information and improved thoroughness of reporting and records throughout the season," concludes Jason.

Jason and Claire are discussing how the Tracit monitoring and spray recommendation reports could be provided in an electronic format suitable for importing directly into Jason's computer programme. (Note: CMS and Muddy Boots are looking at implementing a grower channel, meaning data could be extracted from Tracit and sent to the grower in a format suitable to download it into their existing CropWalker software.) And other future enhancements could see representatives ordering products for dispatch to clients via the PDA while on the road.

This season Easton Agriculture has grown 23ha of potatoes, 40ha of onions and 80ha of broccoli in a carefully-planned rotation with wheat, barley, maize silage and pasture for stock. ➡



Jason Easton amongst a successful broccoli crop with Fruitfed Supplies' Martin Higham and Claire Mills.



SPEEDY MONITORING RESULTS AIDS DIAMONDBACK MOTH CONTROL

Martin Higham, the CMS coordinator for the Manawatu region, has also been part of the PDA pilot, which means he can enter monitoring results he and his team of scouts have collected while in the grower's paddock. The data transmits directly into the Tracit system where the grower's monitoring report is automatically prepared and dispatched to the field representative and the grower.

"It's been an unusual year for diamondback moth," says Martin. "It's been very hot since November so the generations have turned over very quickly. Monitoring has played an important role in tracking how effective control strategies have been and when thresholds are again exceeded. With a limited number of sprays and applications available in each spray window, and careful management required to prevent resistance development, prompt delivery of monitoring data ensures that growers have the best opportunity to time applications as effectively as possible."

Trees and vines need to be pruned correctly

Dr Adrian Spiers from Omnia Primaxa shares his many years of experience regarding correct pruning techniques.

The sustainability of apple, stone fruit, kiwifruit and grape blocks is often determined by wound pathogens which gain entry via pruning wounds. For apples and stonefruit the pathogen is *Chondrostereum purpureum* (silver leaf); for grapes *Eutypa lata* (dead arm); and for kiwifruit unidentified white rot fungi and swollen stem-inducing fungi.

Pruning is probably the most important operation conducted on the orchard but unfortunately is entrusted to those who have a vested interest to do as poor a job as possible. The grower must insist that pruning be done properly or not at all.

Key tips for proper pruning:

1. Always prune on fine days suitable for the drying of washing. Low humidity, wind and sun will ensure that spore levels are minimal and that wound dressings will dry.
2. Always treat wounds on the same day they are made. If wounds are left undressed overnight, a rise in relative humidity can initiate spore release and wound infection.
3. Use a proper wound dressing with a track record such as GreenSeal, Bacseal or Garrison. Never thin wound dressings with water or make your own formulations. Many acrylic paints and stirred-in fungicides can actively inhibit the natural wound micro-flora and, thereby, enable pathogens to infect the wound.
4. Never treat wounds with copper or add copper to paint formulations. Copper inhibits the plant's wound defence response, making wounds more susceptible.
5. Always remove branches by cutting just above the swollen ring of cells (collar) at the base of the branch. This will enable the formation of a circular doughnut-shaped ring of callus around the wound.
6. Never leave stub wounds which are common place on kiwifruit. Stub wounds always die back to the main stem and provide an entry point for white rot fungi.
7. Inspect last year's pruning to see if callus rings are present on your trees (see Fig 1).
8. Use a sharp pruning saw to remove branches. Blunt loppers tend to squeeze tissues and split the wood, facilitating infection.
9. Be wary of biological wound protectants. (I can't make them work.)
10. If pruning is done correctly, wounds will heal completely (see Fig 2).

Proper pruning practice will pay dividends with respect to tree health and sustainable production. 💡



Figure 1: A callused wound



Figure 2: A healed wound



Dacthal: soft option against really tough weeds

With a proven track record under many crop and soil conditions and in various countries around the world, Dacthal 75W is extremely crop-safe.

Onion, spring onion and leek crops compete poorly with weeds. An old favourite, Dacthal 75W[®] herbicide (based on chlorthal-dimethyl), offers onion growers a very safe alternative for effective weed control of tough weeds like wireweed even in sensitive red and spring onion varieties.

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Dacthal 75W helps prevent early weed competition for water, light and nutrients during the initial critical phase of crop growth ensuring maximum crop stand and yield.

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Elliott



Fresh focus within irrigation team

Fruitfed Supplies irrigation personnel from around the country met in Auckland recently. National irrigation manager Max Spence said it was timely to take the opportunity to bring the team together to discuss various new products, suppliers and initiatives. "We have been able to cover a range of topics together as one group in an efficient way which has been very worthwhile and informative."

Pictured at Fruitfed Supplies' Albany head office are (L-R, front): Nigel Saunders (Alexandra); Les Rackley (Richmond); Bill Lucre (Richmond); Max Spence; Adrian Wadsworth (Blenheim); Chris Highman (Blenheim); (L-R, rear) Tim O'Riordan (Te Puke); Bruce Richter (Pukekohe); Richard Shuker (Hastings) and Rex Winks (Blenheim).



TECH-KNOW TIPS

AVOCADOS



Reminders for April:

- ✓ Monitor carefully for **six-spotted mites** as rapid population increases often occur in autumn, especially in the north. **Leaf roller** can also cause major damage to fruit (particularly bunches) through the autumn and early winter period. For details on Fruitfed Supplies' Crop Monitoring Service, contact Sue O'Malley (Whangarei and Far North) on 0274 988 174 or Alastair Reed (Bay of Plenty) on 0274 347 971.
- ✓ April/May is the correct timing for **leaf and soil sampling** in avocado blocks. The resulting analysis provides an accurate indication of plant and soil nutrient status and is necessary to design the coming year's fertiliser programme.
- ✓ To manage **Phytophthora** infection of roots, inject trees with Stemex injection products such as Stemshot AV-1 or AV-2. These products have proven efficacy, versatility and cost effectiveness over the past three seasons. Alternatively, consider injecting Foli-R-Fos 400 when the summer flush has hardened off. Whichever injection system you choose, please contact your Fruitfed Supplies representative or local branch for rates, methods and timing.

Greenhouse thrips continue to be an issue through April and into May. As populations increase very quickly, careful monitoring of the crop is required to minimise damage. Greenhouse thrips have been noted at very high levels this season, both in Bay of Plenty and northern orchards. Calypso is the preferred option for greenhouse thrips control in avocados as it is 'softer' chemistry, with little effect on beneficial species such as *Thripobius semiluteus*, a parasitic wasp which targets greenhouse thrips (see photo).



BRASSICAS



Reminders for April:

- ✓ The **two key aphid species** that colonise brassicas, cabbage grey aphid (*Brevicoryne brassicae*) and green peach aphid (*Myzus persicae*), are at their worst in autumn. Protect brassicas for the winter and early spring markets from aphids by applying Confidor the day before transplanting. Confidor is systemic and protects the whole plant from aphid attack for 4-6 weeks.
- ✓ Monitor crops in the field and apply Chess or Pirimor to control infestations that exceed thresholds. Both products are selective for aphids and have minimal effect on beneficial insects and other non-target organisms.

CITRUS



Reminders for April:

- ✓ Keep a look-out for **citrus red mite**, which often makes an appearance during mid-summer, particularly where hard compounds have been used to control Kelly's citrus thrips. Mit é mec is now registered for citrus red mite control and has the advantage of ovicidal activity, ensuring all life stages of this pest are controlled.
- ✓ **Greenhouse thrips** populations continue to increase and often peak during April and May, rapidly causing typical silvery scarring damage to fruit. **Kelly's citrus thrips** may also still cause issues, particularly in lemons and limes. Success Naturalyte is now registered for use in citrus for control of KCT.
- ✓ **Scale crawler** release will continue through April and May. If careful monitoring is carried out, control options such as Applaud 40SC or DC Tron Plus mineral oil may be applied most effectively as the crawlers and first settled stages are detected.

- ✓ Results achieved with crop protection products for these pests very much depend on product choice, application method, timing and conditions during application. For control options for any of the above pests, please contact your Fruitfed Supplies representative or local branch for product choice and best use practices.

- ✓ Brown rot may infect healthy fruit pre-harvest, especially if conditions are wet (see photo). Control with Kocide 2000 LF, Blue Shield or Dithane Rainshield.



Fruit infected with brown rot (photo courtesy K. Pyle)

GRAPES

Reminders for April:

- ✓ Bunches become increasingly susceptible to **Botrytis bunch rot** as they ripen. Monitor weather forecasts closely and make sure fungicide covers are applied in anticipation of wet weather. This should be the policy through until pre-harvest while observing PHIs.
- ✓ If **bird damage** is a perennial problem, an integrated approach to their management might be appropriate. Netting should be the mainstay of any strategy for growers with high pressure blocks, as they physically exclude feeding birds. Various scaring devices play an important supplementary role and these should be rotated within the block, if possible.
- ✓ Monitor bunches for **leaf roller and mealy bugs at harvest**. The results will determine the appropriate insecticide programmes for next season.

The pre-harvest period represents a useful opportunity to gather information pertinent to next season's pest and disease management decisions, particularly for two commercially-important invertebrate pests: **leaf roller** and **mealy bugs**.

Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand (SWNZ) advocates that ten bunches from 20 bays across the vineyard block (i.e. 200 bunches) be surveyed as close to harvest as possible for incidence of both pests. The thresholds for spraying the following season depend on whether sprays were applied during the season (for leaf roller), or if leaf roll virus (LRV) is evident in the block (for mealy bugs).

If a leaf roller spray was applied and 10% of bunches had leaf roller infestations, then the vines should be treated with an appropriate insecticide the following season. A value of 20% is required if no sprays were applied.

For mealy bugs, if no LRV symptoms were detected in the block, the threshold for a spring insecticide application is 3% of bunches infested with mealy bugs. If LRV is an issue, the threshold is nil. Please contact your local Fruitfed Supplies branch if you wish to discuss pre-harvest monitoring for these pests in more detail.



Botrytis cinerea

KIWIFRUIT

Reminders for April:

- ✓ **Scale** has been a major issue in many kiwifruit blocks this season; late season control of this pest is limited to mineral oil (such as DC Tron Plus). Increased use of DC Tron Plus for scale control in kiwifruit this season has given good results, with few crop safety issues. At this stage of the season, scale sprays must be in response of monitoring and label directions regarding application must be followed particularly closely.
- ✓ Continue to monitor for **leaf roller** as late season infestations (particularly of black lyre leaf roller) may cause extensive damage in some blocks. Control with Delfin WG as required (2-day PHI).
- ✓ As we head into April, remember to visit Fruitfed Supplies for all your **harvest requirements**.

Assess crops prior to harvest to determine whether **stain removal** is required. A relatively small price gain for packed trays is all that is required to economically justify an application of a suitable stain remover.

Research by Fruitfed Supplies Technical team, combined with growers' field experience over the past ten-plus years, has demonstrated the effectiveness

of Kiwilustre (a lactic acid formulation) for the removal of kiwifruit stains. Kiwilustre is very effective when used correctly and treated fruit does not re-stain in storage (an issue with older formulations containing citric acid). The Kiwilustre formulation also gives increased protection against re-staining in the field if rain occurs after application but before picking. For further information on fruit staining causes, remedies and best application practices, please contact your local Fruitfed Supplies branch or representative.



Water staining on kiwifruit

LETTUCE

Reminders for April:

- ✓ **Downy mildew** (*Bremia lactucae*) and **powdery mildew** (*Erysiphe cichoracearum*) both make the most of any free moisture or high humidity to release fresh spores and initiate new infections. Both diseases are found on the older leaves first and should be identified correctly before any control strategy is undertaken.
- ✓ Two species of **sclerotinia** cause lettuce drop in many autumn and winter crops. Up to two applications of Prolific can be applied to lettuce crops for the control of sclerotinia, but growers should also use crop rotation, water management and cultivation to reduce disease pressure in a crop.

ONIONS

Reminders for April:

- ✓ Wet weather in late summer and early autumn can create conditions favourable for *Botrytis allii* which causes **neck rot** and the **bacterial**

soft rot pathogens *Pseudomonas* spp. and *Erwinia carotovora*. Bulbs can readily be infected through mechanical wounds or if the necks are still succulent at harvest. Control should focus on preventing infection through the neck and minimising wounds at harvest. Once in storage, low temperature and humidity, and good ventilation will reduce disease development.

- ✓ Consider **onion seed requirements** for next season and contact your Fruitfed Supplies representative to place orders.

PIPFruit



Reminders for April:

- ✓ If monitoring has identified **black spot** lesions on fruit or leaves, maintain a regular protective fungicide cover (e.g. Orthocide) to control. NB: Captan (Orthocide) 14-day WHP, but only one application in the last 28 days. For those participating in Apple Futures, maintain a protective cover of Kumulus DF.
- ✓ Fruitlets are also very susceptible to **summer rots** during this period. If rain and warm temperatures anticipated, apply a protectant fungicide.
- ✓ Continue regular **calcium** applications. Avoid spraying under hot, dry conditions or under slow drying conditions as fruit and foliar injury can occur. Add a wetting agent if applied alone. The formulation of a compound, concentration, pH, and drying time are some of the important factors in calcium spray uptake. In this pre-harvest phase when numerous calcium applications have already been made, select a safe calcium formulation, e.g. Stopit.
- ✓ Remember also to sample 1000 fruit per sampling area for **San Jose scale** and **mealy bugs** in order to determine the appropriate control measures required for next season.
- ✓ Continue monitoring **codling moth**. Remember trapping activity and trap maintenance records are essential for audit purposes. Apply Delegate if thresholds are exceeded. NB: Delegate 14-day PHI.

Continue to monitor traps for leaf roller and if thresholds are exceeded, apply an appropriate insecticide. Your choice will depend on variety, pre-harvest interval and market destination. Apply Delegate if both leaf roller and codling moth were found. If only leaf roller are present, apply Success or Proclaim. NB: Delegate, Success 14-day PHI, Proclaim 3-day PHI, Apple Futures 5-day PHI.



Leaf roller larvae on an apple

SUMMERFRUIT



Reminders for April:

- ✓ Apply pre-infection sprays of **copper fungicides** over the pre-leaf fall period and repeat applications as necessary over the leaf fall period.
- ✓ Inspect blocks for trees expressing **silver leaf** symptoms and mark affected trees for treatment. The first steps are to prune out and burn infected wood, and to protect wounds and pruning cuts with a suitable protectant wound dressing such as GreenSeal, Bacseal or Garrison.

The autumn leaf fall period is critical for the control of **bacterial disease** in stonefruit.

Leaf scars remaining after leaf abscission provide ideal entry sites for blast and bacterial spot disease when drops of water contaminated with bacteria are sucked into exposed vessels. Pruning wounds and other injuries can also serve as penetration sites.

The key to satisfactory control of blast and bacterial spot is to keep bacterial populations low on plants at all times and to prevent opportunities for infections to establish. No resting stages are known in the life cycle of blast, but the sites of bacterial activity alternate between branch cankers in winter and leaf spots in summer. The applications of copper, such as Fruitfed Supplies Copper Oxychloride or Kocide during the post-harvest (pre-leaf fall) and leaf fall periods are vital to protect leaf scars from infection.



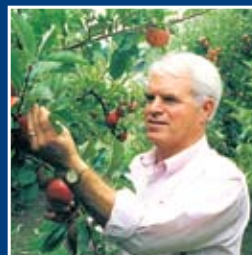
Leaf spot *Pseudomonas syringae*

POTATOES

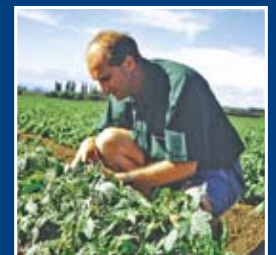


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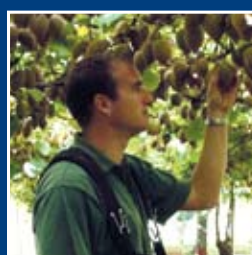
- ✓ Warm, dry weather, cracked moulds and exposed tubers increases the risk of tuber infestation by **potato tuber moth**. Monitor late season crops carefully so that insecticides are applied if they are required and when they have the most effect.
- ✓ Avoid over-watering as spells of saturated soil can cause a number of physiological and/or disease problems in tubers, particularly if they go into storage.



Ken Jeffery – contributes for pipfruit and summerfruit.



Tim Herman – contributes for brassicas, onions, potatoes, squash and tomatoes.



Richard Bawden – contributes for avocados, citrus and kiwifruit.



Paul Hassan – contributes for grapes.

Nemasys nematodes offer Jornas sciarid control option

Well-known wholesale growers of annuals, houseplants and commercial seedlings, Jornas Ltd is utilising an effective combination of biological and chemical products to control fungus gnats, or glasshouse Sciarids.

Ivan Casteels heads the growing operation at Jornas' extensive Christchurch facility and says Sciarid fly was a problem in rock-wool seedling production for tomatoes, capsicum and cucumber.

Ivan has used Nemasys® biopesticides during his many years of pot plant nursery production in the Netherlands and found the product controlled the Sciarid larvae well.

"Here we make an application of Nemasys *Steinernema feltiae* before transplanting when the tomato seedlings are still at 100% density in rockwool plugs. Then, providing a synergistic effect, we apply Confidor after transplanting. This has no effect on the nematodes, but helps control the larvae until the *Steinernema* population builds up," explains Ivan.

Another Nemasys application is made to the growing tomatoes once transplanted and Ivan feels the level of control offered is very effective. "Of course with all beneficials there's always a population of Sciarid larvae present, but as their population rises and falls, the *Steinernema* population rises and falls in balance."

Ivan sees several benefits with the use of beneficials. "You don't have those couple of extra sprays – good for staff and good economically – provided you've done the Nemasys applications correctly. When people hear you talk about using beneficials, I think there are some commercial benefits."

Recently Becker Underwood in New Zealand arranged for a direct shipment from their UK production facility. Business manager Bruce Gemmill says the trial shipment was very successful with the excellent Nemasys survival rate ensuring the product quality was equivalent to what's available in Europe. "We also had very clear instructions regarding rates and best use advice," says Bruce.

From his experience using Nemasys overseas and locally, Ivan recommends:

- Don't spray under high pressure; you'll kill the Nemasys.
- Don't use a very fine filter; you'll filter out the Nemasys.
- If you use UV treatment on water, don't add to tank as you'll kill the Nemasys
- Most importantly, check the viability of nematodes in Nemasys before you use it. Nemasys must be kept refrigerated at 5°C, but don't freeze it. Incorrectly-stored Nemasys will be ineffective no matter how many applications you make.

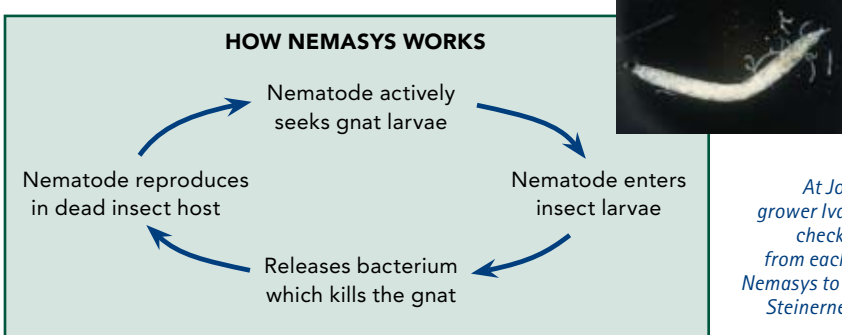
"I really see the benefit of Nemasys if you use it in the right way," concludes Ivan. ➔



Fruitfed Supplies' Tim Mounsey and Tim Herman unpack the new shipment of Nemasys in Christchurch after direct shipment from the UK production facilities

NEMASYS BIOPESTICIDES: THE DETAILS

- ✓ Nemasys, based on a unique strain of the insect pathogenic nematode *Steinernema feltiae*, provides a biological solution to control fungus gnats (glasshouse sciarids).
- ✓ In their vigorously infective stage, the nematodes attack Sciarid larvae by entering their natural body openings. Inside, they release symbiotic bacteria that quickly kill the pest. Reproduction inside the insect releases a new generation of infective juveniles which disperse in search of further prey.
- ✓ Persistent in the growing medium providing protection against pest larvae re-infestation
- ✓ Easy application using sprayers, overhead irrigation or sprinkler systems
- ✓ Compatible with a large range of chemical pesticides and with other biological/IPM systems
- ✓ Non-toxic natural product that is safe to users, consumers and the environment with no disposal restrictions



At Jornas, head grower Ivan Casteels checks a sample from each packet of Nemasys to ensure the *Steinernema feltiae* are active



Fruitfed Supplies

Facts is a monthly publication of Fruitfed Supplies. Feedback to the editor is welcome. Please contact Kate Gordon, Relish Communications, c/o PO Box 2116, Auckland, email: kate@relishcomm.co.nz or mobile 021 587 227. Subscription details and address updates, please phone Fruitfed Supplies national office on 09 448 0510.

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