

New Tool Provides Shot of Optimism

By Harold Browning



As we head into our sixth year in existence, the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) remains focused on the prize: advancing tools and tactics that retain productivity of current tree inventories while long-term solutions are developed, tested and delivered.

In that vein, due to the work of the CRDF and many others, growers across Florida are now using three bactericides designed to knock back *Liberibacter* and provide therapy to infected trees in the ground. Being able to use these compounds provided a huge dose of good news and optimism to the Florida citrus industry.

Exercising authority given to him under federal law, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam in early March declared an agricultural crisis which permits growers to use streptomycin sulfate (FireWall™ 50WP, AgroSource Inc.), oxytetracycline hydrochloride (FireLine™ 17WP, AgroSource Inc.) and oxytetracycline calcium complex (Mycoshield®, Nufarm Americas Inc.) in foliar applications.

Putnam's declaration couldn't have happened at a better time. It allowed growers to apply the bactericides before the spring flush and bloom occurred. Research has shown for optimum efficacy, the products need to be applied during maximum flush of young leaves at the appropriate use rate and finished spray volume to ensure coverage of the young foliage.

Megan Dewdney and Jim Graham of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences have created a document on suggested use patterns that can be found at <http://lake.ifas.ufl.edu/agriculture/citrus/documents/AntibioticReferenceSheetv5-web.pdf>

Will these products improve yield, maintain yield or slow decline? We do not have enough data at this point to answer that definitively. What we do know is that younger, healthier trees respond better than older, unhealthy trees. And we are seeing a reduction in infection, improved phloem, root recovery and an increase in leaf development. These processes all have to happen before you can have better yields.

Data provided by grower use during this first application period should provide more answers.

An important point that growers must keep in mind is that they can use any of the three products until the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completes its review of the Section 18 petition submitted by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services late last year. The EPA has not given a time frame to complete the review.

While we wait on the decision by EPA, it is essential that growers make sure they carefully follow the guidelines spelled out in Commissioner Putnam's declaration letter if they use any of the bactericides. To view the letter, go to <http://files.ctctcdn.com/168a5f59201/e7bd14cf-0a3a-4f5c-9d3d-66ac12574bbc.pdf>

Growers should recognize the importance of maintaining the rotational aspects of these three products, and the use conditions concerning worker re-entry and pre-harvest intervals. Deviation from the label is against the law. If the EPA approves the Section 18 exemption, some of the details could change. So growers need to stay on top of the latest news.

Harold Browning is Chief Operations Officer of CRDF. The foundation is charged with funding citrus research and getting the results of that research to use in the grove.



Column sponsored by the Citrus Research and Development Foundation