

Game Changer! A New Fruit Fly Puts Northern Michigan's Orchards at Risk

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A new, particularly dangerous species of fruit fly has invaded Northwest Lower Michigan. Not the ordinary fruit fly that loves overripe and rotting fruit, this one cuts through the skin on young, healthy fruit to lay its eggs, ruining whole crops. Known as the Spotted Wing Drosophila or SWD, this bug is threatening the entire soft-fruit industry of our region.

According to Nikki Rothwell, Coordinator at MSU's Michigan Horticultural Research Center, this little beast is a real game changer for the region's fruit growers. A great deal of work needs to be done to understand SWD and combat it. And the industry needs to move quickly because the threat is growing.

Topics Covered

Insect Pests; Agriculture; Invasive Species; Biology

Next Generation Science Standards

- 5-ESS3-1. Obtain and combine information about ways individual communities use science ideas to protect the Earth's resources and environment.
- MS-LS1-4. Use argument based on empirical evidence and scientific reasoning to support an explanation for how characteristic animal behaviors and specialized plant structures affect the probability of successful reproduction of animals and plants respectively.
- HS-LS2-7. Design, evaluate, and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on the environment and biodiversity.