

Welcome ■ About DOACS ■ Publications ■ Help ■ Search ■ E-mail Us ■ Home



## DOACS Press Releases

Florida Department of Agriculture  
and Consumer Services  
The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800  
(850) 488 - 3022

### Department Press Release 02-26-98

Terence McElroy  
(850) 488-3022

#### CRAWFORD ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO CANKER PROGRAM

MIAMI — Florida Agriculture Commissioner Bob Crawford today announced a series of changes to the citrus canker eradication program, including the cutting of only infected trees and a one-year experiment to track the spread of the disease from infected trees to exposed ones.

Moreover, Crawford said he is working with the Florida Legislature, as well as with both public and private agencies, to fund a reforestation program designed to replace removed trees with new, healthy ones.

The changes are being made, Crawford said, to accelerate eradication efforts and minimize disruption as much as possible to residents.

"We appreciate all the cooperation we have received from the public and recognize the sacrifices that residents have had to endure," Crawford said. "We want to do all we can to help those residents in the quarantine area."

Citrus canker is a devastating and highly contagious bacterial disease that attacks citrus, including oranges, sour oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, lemons and limes. Infected trees are weakened, causing leaves to drop, fruit to drop prematurely and the trees to deteriorate, eventually yielding a small, substandard fruit crop. It is typically spread by wind-driven rain, birds and animals.

The current outbreak was discovered near Miami International Airport, where it was presumably brought in on infected fruit, in September 1995. The current eradication effort covers roughly 365 square miles in Dade County.

Left untreated, canker would damage or destroy the roughly 2 million citrus trees in Dade County, and ultimately would spread throughout Florida.

Elements of the plan announced by Crawford include:

- The cutting of only infected trees to accelerate their elimination. For the last year, officials have been cutting both infected trees and those exposed citrus trees within 125 feet of infected ones.

- The establishment of experimental research zones — subject to the approval of the U.S. Department of Agriculture — to track the spread of the disease from infected trees to exposed ones.

Scientists in the program will designate properties in highly-infected areas, moderately-infected areas and low-infected areas to determine the rate at which exposed trees are being infected. While scientists will review their findings each month, it is envisioned that the experiment will go on for a full year.

- The program will begin using Brush-Be-Gone, a commonly-used and widely-available product for stump treatment in place of Garlon.
- Increased notification to homeowners before canker eradication officials arrive in their yards. While crews attempt to notify homeowners when they go to inspect properties, Crawford said increased efforts will be made to contact residents in advance of visits. For example, local newspapers will be asked to run maps of areas that will be visited.
- The creation of a reforestation program. Crawford said he is working with the Florida Legislature, and with the U.S. Forest Service, among other organizations, to try to come up with a program that would replace trees that have been destroyed as a means of revitalizing the urban canopy.
- The distribution of a "citizen responsibility package" to homes within the affected area. It would involve dropping off literature with a description and photograph of citrus canker, and asking residents to call the