

APRIL 2018 FARMING REPORT



BACK TO BASICS

The AgTech industry has come along way over the past decade inventing new gadgets intended to improve the efficiency of water applied to crops. While these tools can be resourceful, they are only as good as the irrigation system is operating. In many cases, the plumbing and water distribution in an orchard are already established and they are very expensive to replace. We make it a priority to make sure the system is functioning as efficient as possible.

The basic items to inspect are broken or plugged emitters, using identical emitters, damage from picking and harvesting crews & coyotes, plugged filters, and junk in the tubing. The filtration unit must also be functioning properly. It is also a good idea to use an irrigation service company to perform a uniformity test.

I know, this is basic and a no-brainer concept, but we have found many farms that fall short of delivering proper water to the crops and it is usually due to lack of preparation and execution. The farm must be diligent to supply the proper replacement tubing, sprinklers, and parts to maintain proper functionality. Spring is a good time to evaluate and fix any problems.

CITRUS BLOOM

This time of the year, the skies are clear blue, the view of the snow covered peaks are visible from Highway 99, and there are bees everywhere. The fantastic aroma of citrus bloom is everywhere if you live on the east side of the valley.

The bloom period for citrus is nearly at petal fall stage in the Central Valley during this 3rd week of April. My observations is a very large bloom in volume. The big question is, what will this yield for a crop? If it sticks, then we are looking at a much larger citrus crop than this past season. But, there have been years that a majority of bloom drops and equalizes out volume. Which is better for the industry? Certainly depends on the point of view.

Our goal for our growers is to set as much fruit as possible, then react after the fruit has set.

We have had good luck accomplishing this with front-loading the trees with nutrition going into the bloom. Since we had cold and wet conditions in early April, irrigation water did not start until the skies cleared. Even then, the first irrigation of the season was done to carry nutrition to the trees. Timing is a key element of setting big crops, and we strive to be on-point at all times.

THE WATER SPIGOT IS ON

The recent storms of April caused a shift in the availability of water farmers utilize from the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Starting this week, irrigation water suppliers throughout the valley are selling water coined "uncontrolled flow" that does not count against any contract volumes of water supply. Typically, this water is less expensive than contract water, since it is a nuisance to reservoir operators looking to alleviate abundant water in anticipation of the spring and summer ice melt. In order to preserve groundwater, growers are being asked to take this water in lieu of pumping from wells, and the price is reflective of that.

BABY TREES



Young citrus trees are prime targets for insects like earwigs, thrip, snail, and ants. These critters can sneak up fast, so its best to be prepared to keep them away. The tree wraps (as seen in the pic) are perfect hiding places for these chewing insects that can devastate the new spring growth. We have found it is best to apply deterrents in the wrap to keep them out.

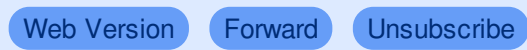
For more information or questions on all things related to farming, please send me

an email to info@neufeldag.com.

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