

# Pest Alert

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Plant Protection and Quarantine

## European Cherry Fruit Fly (*Rhagoletis cerasi*)



Adult European cherry fruit fly (Biopix, S.D. Lund, [www.biopix.com](http://www.biopix.com))

European cherry fruit fly is the most serious pest of cherries in Europe. The fly attacks ripening fruit, causing it to rot and fall off the tree. In heavily infested areas, the fly can destroy up to 100 percent of cherry and other host plants if left uncontrolled.

### Distribution

European cherry fruit fly is found throughout Europe and in parts of West and Central Asia. In 2016, Canada confirmed this pest on wild honeysuckle at several sites in Ontario. In 2017, the United States found European cherry fruit fly on traps hung in wild honeysuckle plants and sweet cherry trees along the Niagara River in New York. This was the first U.S. detection of European cherry fruit fly.

### Damage

European cherry fruit fly attacks only the fruit of its host plants. Larvae-infested fruit may have dark soft spots or appear wilted or shriveled. As mature larvae emerge from the fruit, they may leave behind visible exit holes.

If European cherry fruit fly becomes established in the United States, it could affect U.S. access to foreign cherry markets and cause lower prices and economic losses for U.S. cherry growers.

### Host Range and At-Risk Areas of the United States

European cherry fruit fly prefers sweet cherries and honeysuckle, but may also attack tart cherries. If this pest establishes itself in New York and spreads to other parts of the country, it could threaten commercial cherry production along the Pacific Coast (California, Oregon, and Washington), in the Northeast (Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania), and in several Western and Central States (Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, and Utah).

### Appearance and Life Cycle

Adult flies range in length from 1/8 to 3/16 of an inch (3.5–4.0 millimeters). Both males and females are mostly black with yellow to orange heads. A

large yellow dot is visible on their backs. The wings are transparent with dark bands.

Adults typically emerge from May to July and have an average lifespan of 2 to 4 weeks. Females usually lay one egg beneath the skin of each piece of fruit. Once they hatch from the eggs, the larvae develop inside the fruit and feed for up to 6 weeks. As the larvae develop, they damage the fruit pulp. Mature larvae exit the fruit through emergence holes, drop to the ground, and burrow into the soil. Once in the soil, they pupate within a few days and overwinter in the soil underneath or near the host plant.

### Preventing Fruit Fly Spread

When U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or State agriculture officials find an infestation of invasive fruit flies that could damage crops in this country, State regulatory officials first establish an intrastate quarantine to prevent the pest's spread within that State. USDA then establishes a parallel interstate quarantine to keep the

pest from spreading to other States. Together, these quarantines allow State and Federal officials to control and suppress the outbreak locally and regulate the movement of host fruits, nursery plants, and other items that could harbor the pest. These efforts help protect growers in other vulnerable parts of the country.

### **What You Can Do**

Please cooperate with agricultural workers who may be in your area surveying for the pest. In areas where the pest has been found, agricultural workers may request approval from the property owner to apply treatment to prevent the spread.

When traveling, declare all food, live animals, and plant or animal products to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer or agriculture specialist at the first port of entry. If your items are generally allowed, the inspector will check them to make sure they are free from pests and disease.

If you travel to Canada, be advised that you may not bring cherries from Ontario into the United States. Cherries from other Canadian provinces are allowed if they are accompanied by a receipt or other document that confirms the fruit's origin. For more information, view the Federal Order: [www.aphis.usda.gov/import\\_export/plants/plant\\_imports/federal\\_order/downloads/2017/DA-2017-15.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/plants/plant_imports/federal_order/downloads/2017/DA-2017-15.pdf).

### **Learn More**

To learn more, visit USDA's exotic fruit fly Web site ([www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-health/ff](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-health/ff)) or contact:

- **The New York State Integrated Pest Management Program**  
[nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/fruits](http://nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/fruits)
- **Your local Extension office**  
[www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension)
- **Your State department of agriculture**  
[www.nationalplantboard.org/member](http://www.nationalplantboard.org/member)
- **The nearest USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service office**  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/sphd](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/sphd)