

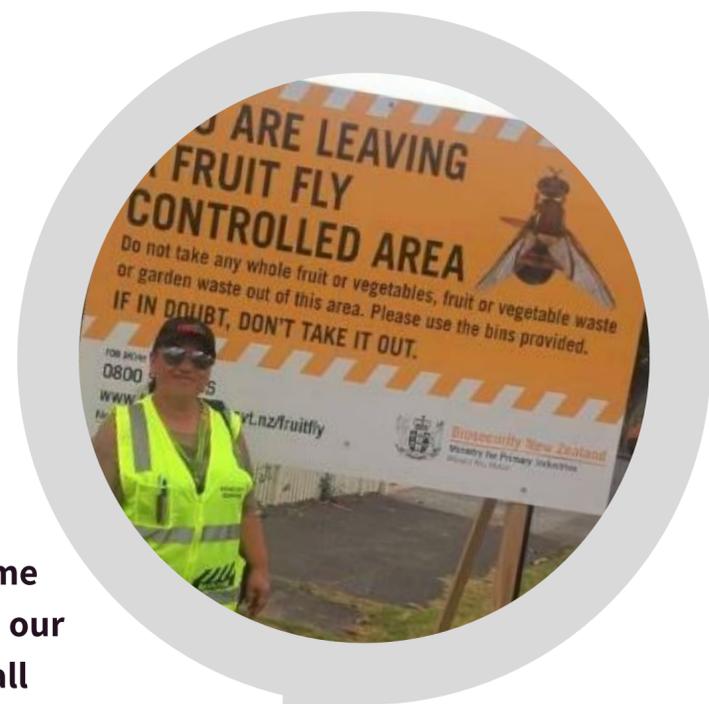
KiwiNet: helping fight fruit flies

Throughout 2019, KiwiNet members took part in the Auckland fruit fly responses. Here, KiwiNet member Lori Topine, an Orchard Supervisor from OPAC (an Opotoki based kiwifruit packing and storage business) tells us about her time on the frontline.

What an awesome opportunity to be a part of the fruit fly response team in Auckland. I found the experience to be a real eye-opener. Not only did it make me realise how vulnerable our industry can be to such a tiny fruit fly that breached our borders but also how quickly the response teams were brought together from all over New Zealand (the logistics alone is mind-boggling).

The experience has led me to look at the bigger picture and be more observant on the orchard, to take notice of things that aren't the norm and ask the question "Why aren't we talking about biosecurity more?" We need to encourage everyone on-orchard to look for and report the unusual.

While working on the response, I got to work alongside and bond with colleagues from other parts of the OPAC business, meet and work with a great team of ladies from Apata pack-house, work with John, Linda and Karen from KVH and meet and work with people from different sectors within horticulture and biosecurity, sharing our own knowledge and experiences.



Health & Safety was a big focus every morning ensuring we were geared up correctly, had plenty of food and water to sustain us out in the community and were always safe. We were also told in the morning briefing how all of us played an important part in the response.

While working out in the field, community members in the affected suburbs were very receptive to us. We were turning up in our high-viz vests, carrying our gear and information, and they welcomed us on to their properties. It was good to see people who were growing their own gardens (many on a very impressive scale) want to do the right thing and play their part. They were ready with lots of questions out of curiosity but mostly, so they could know what part they needed to do to help protect the things that make their homes and communities special.

All I can say is, if you're ever asked if you want to be a part of a response team (hopefully not any time soon), jump on board!

