

## KiwiNet: helping fight fruit flies

**Throughout 2019, KiwiNet members took part in the Auckland fruit fly responses. Here, KiwiNet member Marlene Edmonds, a Packing Supervisor at Trevelyan's (New Zealand's largest single-site kiwifruit packing operation) tells us about her time on the frontline.**

It was great being part of the fruit fly response. I was in Auckland with two colleagues from Trevelyan's and I feel honoured to have been part of the team. I felt like I was representing Trevelyan's, my job, and my community, doing our bit to keep this pest out because we all know if we let it in there will be huge consequences.

I started out doing fruit collection and then was trained for trapping. The training was really well done and gave me a lot of time to read up on the things I needed to know so that I could do a good job. Personally, I liked learning a new and different skill and meeting new people at the same time.

Every morning there was a daily briefing – I thought these were amazing. Nothing was too much trouble for the operations manager running them, and we all knew there was no such thing as a dumb question. We could ask whatever we wanted and ask for whatever we needed.

Everything was well organised. There were a whole lot of people working to make sure we were well hydrated, had enough food, and it was drummed in to us that if we needed a break all we had to do was put our hand up and say so. Health & Safety was definitely a priority in this sense.

I worked in all three of the affected suburbs. I always felt safe going on to people's properties. People welcomed us with open arms – maybe because they felt such a strong personal connection to the issue. People had put a lot of time and so much hard work into their backyard gardens and vegetables that they wanted to do everything they could to protect them. I think it also could have been that there was a lot of advertising and signage about the response and all the groups working together to combat the flies.

If you ever get the chance to take part in a biosecurity response you should just go ahead and do it, it's an awesome experience – the people look after you and are lovely. This is the second time I've been part of one (I also worked on the response in Grey Lynn a few years ago) and I'll volunteer again without a doubt.

