

KiwiNet: helping fight fruit flies

For most of 2019, KiwiNet took part in the Auckland fruit fly responses. Here, Carol Smart tells us about her time on the frontline.

Carol is an auditor at Orangewood in Kerikeri. Orangewood is a kiwifruit post-harvest and orchard management company that has been operating since 1983.

My experience working in Auckland on the fruit fly response was very informative - I gained a good understanding of some of the unique aspects of the New Zealand biosecurity system and how we deal with harmful organisms when they enter the country.

I was working with more than 100 people. We were divided into a few different teams every day to do surveillance, trapping, baiting, fruit collecting, lab work and more. It was always emphasised in the daily briefing that team morale and communication is very important, especially when working with the public.

We were mostly working in Northcote, undertaking a whole range of activities - including things I had only previously seen on the Border Patrol TV programme! I was helping with investigations and inspections, including accessing properties previously classed as having potential risk. Access was necessary for collecting fruit samples, providing treatment, carrying out forms of surveillance and removing risk materials.

We weren't allowed to enter dwellings, places of gathering or marae without permission of the owner. We could access the property, but we couldn't into the house or garage unless the owner allowed us to do so. This was a challenge we had to work through in some cases because in some houses you need to go through a garage or house to get to the backyard.

As response members, we were given everything we needed. We had ID, hi-vis gear with biosecurity logos, a work car, and a work phone with the really good biosecurity app already installed so that we could enter and record all sorts of information about the places we visited, the types of fruit trees and plants on properties, and what we collected.

I worked in a small group at the start with my colleague from Orangewood and another person. Our team was given more responsibility to work on our own because of our experience in the kiwifruit industry. They recognised our skills and experience in identification of plants and pests which was really nice.

I'm pleased that I was part of this interesting and enlightening experience. I would definitely do it again and encourage anyone else thinking about it to go right ahead!



Carol Smart (right) and her colleague, Nory Estal from Orangewood

