News from Northern New York Agricultural Development Program

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Link: http://www.nnyagdev.org/index.php/2014/02/26/help-for-strawberry-weevils-march-4-5-in-nny/

NNY Strawberry Growers to Hear of New Hope for Defeating Destructive Weevils

Paul Smiths and Gouverneur, NY – New York strawberry growers are hearing about a promising treatment for their fruit crop based on a Cornell University entomologist's success with applying microscopic worms to beat back a highly-destructive alfalfa crop pest. Dr. Elson Shields expects to confirm the success of field trials with native-New York nematodes to control two species of weevils in Northern NY strawberry crops this year.

"Like alfalfa snout beetle, strawberry root weevil and black vine weevil are difficult to control with conventional pesticides, but they are very susceptible to attack by the biocontrol nematodes," says Shields, who received an Entomological Society of America Award for Excellence in Integrated Pest Management in 2013.

Strawberry growers interested in learning more about Shields' research, funded by the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program, will have the opportunity to hear him speak on "Using Native Nematodes as Biocontrol of Root Weevils in Strawberries" as part of the 9:30am-2pm Advances in Field Strawberry Production Workshops set for March 4 at Paul Smiths and March 5 at the Cambry Court Activity Center in Gouverneur.

Shields estimates weevil damage at $20,000-$30,000 of economic loss at the regional berry farm hosting the nematode research trials.

The Shields Lab at Cornell will complete a series of soil tests this spring to confirm the effectiveness of the nematodes for controlling the berry pests.

"Based on our years of experience with biocontrol nematodes, we expect to document an excellent level of control in the berry fields in May 2014. We also expect the nematodes to persist within the soil of the strawberry production environment for a number of years to continue to minimize the root damage by the root weevils," Shields says.

The March 4 and 5 workshops focus on new ways of growing strawberries in field soil, detecting and mitigating soil-borne pests, and utilizing biological controls such as Shields' nematode application treatment. Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program Berry Specialist Laura McDermott will present information on June bearing and day neutral growing systems, strawberry root problems, and spotted wing drosophila.

For more information and to register for the $5 strawberry production workshops, contact Cornell Cooperative Extension Horticultural Specialist Amy Ivy at 518-561-7450, adi2@cornell.edu.

To learn more about the farmer-driven Northern New York Agricultural Development Program which receives funding through the New York State Senate for agricultural research, technical assistance and educational outreach in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties, visit the website at www.nnyagdev.org. The website includes a manual for the on-farm rearing of biocontrol nematodes.