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No flies on insect expert

By DANNAE SYNOT

MORE than halfway through his tenure at the Shire of Gingin and forensic entomologist David Cook believes he has made headway in combating the region's industry crippling stable fly epidemic.

The UWA insects expert has been working since October to reduce fly numbers in identified hotspots, particularly on commercial farming properties where there is a large amount of crop residue.

Dr Cook has identified a large concentration of stable flies in areas including Woodridge Estate, Winfield Park and Lennard Brook in recent months.

"There are a number of horticultural businesses popping up around the shire, hence why there is a stable fly problem," he said.

"Flies breed almost exclusively out of rejected harvest, such as cauliflower, celery, broccoli and lettuce - anything that requires irrigation, or effluent ponds at piggeries.

"Combined with a sandy soil environment and recent ongoing warm temperatures, it is a perfect breeding ground."

If the problem is left unaddressed, stable flies feed

off the blood of livestock, causing major distress and health problems to the animals, as well as significant economic loss to farmers.

"It only takes 20 flies to feed off one animal, causing it to lose condition," Dr Cook said.

"When that happens, owners have to spend extra to feed their livestock."

Dr Cook said that while there has been a drop in fly numbers in the past month, he was still focusing his attention on areas once identified as having a more severe concentration, revisiting the sites weekly.

"Prevention (of stable fly breeding) is difficult, but it's important we continue to keep on top of it," he said.

Dr Cook said that keeping the public well-informed was the key to combating the problem and options for disposing of harvest materials were being investigated.

"Spraying residue is not the long term answer," he said.

Dr Cook hopes when he finishes his monitoring and education program by May, that farmers will be better prepared for the next stable fly breeding season.

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Forensic entomologist David Cook has identified stable fly hotspots across the Shire of Gingin.

Police warn drivers of double demerits

DRIVERS are reminded double demerit points will be in place during the Labour Day period - from Friday March 4 to Monday March 7, inclusive.

Senior Sergeant Wally Brierley of East Metro Traffic Office is warning motorists that double demerits for certain offences come into effect at 12:01am, on the Friday.

"Speeding, seatbelt offences pertaining to drivers, driver permitting travel in open load spaces, exceeding 0.05 per cent blood alcohol concentration and presence of prescribed illicit drugs or fail to supply oral sample or blood sample will all carry double demerit point penalties," he said.

"Additionally, I am urging drivers to get the road safety message and not drive when fatigued or use a motor vehicle that is not in a roadworthy condition."

He said all patrol staff would be on duty throughout the long weekend.

BRIEFLY

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL INTAKE

STATE Education Minister Liz Constable last week announced plans for a third intake of Independent Public Schools. Ninety eight schools already have become independent, giving them more ownership and overall school direction and teacher selection. Applications for the third intake close in mid-May and successful schools will be notified in July. They will start as Independent Schools at the beginning of 2012.

AGM FOR BULLSBROOK HIGH

The Bullsbrook District High School P and C Association will hold its annual general meeting on Wednesday, March 9. The meeting will begin at 7pm in the Brearley Street staff room. All welcome. For information, email bullsbrookpandc@hotmail.com.

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