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Dry heat hits

New season, old foes

KATE AYERS & PETER MITHAM

FORT ST. JOHN – Wildfire season is off to an early start in BC, driven by dry conditions last fall that have continued into this year. “It’s been very dry. We went into the winter with the driest soil conditions I’ve ever seen,” says grain producer Dave Wuthrich of PW Farms in Flatrock, a half-hour drive east of Fort St. John. “We’re used to seeding into mud. And it is so dry that I seeded through slough holes that I have never

Disruptions ▶



Blossoms of hope

A wave of warm weather in mid-May helped keep apple trees on track, with blossoms like these heralding a solid crop this fall. But much depends on pollination and good weather through the rest of the season, two variables growers know better than to take for granted. *MYRNA STARK LEADER*

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Pest pressures shift

PETER MITHAM

COMOX – The sudden onset of heat in May has given some insects the boost they needed after a cool spring. Tent caterpillars were flourishing on Pender Island, while in Comox, integrated pest management specialist Bonnie Zand was on the lookout for spider mites. “Most of our pests, their development depends on heat units,” she says. “Expect that timings may be pushed ahead.”

A single burst of heat isn’t a

disaster in itself but it primes bug populations to flourish later in the season. “We had four or five days of high, 28, 29 degree weather ... [which] really gives them a jump on development,” she says. “Depending on what the rest of the season does, we’ve got pests that like really hot dry weather, things like spider mites. So if we continue with hot and dry from this early in the season, it’s just going to give those pests that really like that a boost.” Conversely, pests like cabbage maggot, which prefer

a cool, wet spring and thrived last year could be stopped in their tracks by a sudden change in weather. Zand recommends that growers scout their crops, taking note of anything unusual and recognizing that conditions are constantly evolving. “Check your fields is what I would say,” she says. “Be aware that things can change really quickly with that burst of really hot weather that we’ve had.” While the hot weather has

Warm weather ▶

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