

AG DIGEST

Thousands of Monterey County third-graders enjoy Farm Day

Third-graders from every corner of Monterey County attended Salinas' Farm Day Experience Nov. 3 at the California Rodeo Grounds.

The experiences helps students learn about food production, farming practices, sustainability, and animal caretaking using interactive stations and booths.

Farm Day happens annually in three different locations around the county, engaging 6,500 students annually. Local volunteers this year included staff from Salinas-based Taylor Farms.

A volunteer-run field trip funded by the non-profit Monterey County Agriculture Education, Inc., this educational program has reached approximately 130,000 third-graders since its inception in the mid-1980s.

For more information, please contact the MCAE Farm Day Coordinator at <http://montereycountyageducation.org/index.php?page=contact>.

— *Aylin Woodward*

Scientists stopping avocado pest before it reaches California

Scientists have created a better trap to lure the redbay ambrosia beetle, which is responsible for the deaths of more than 12,000 trees in Miami-Dade County in Florida over the past three years, according to Dennis O'Brien in the November 2016 issue of *AgResearch*

Magazine.

The beetle digs into the trees and releases a fungus that blocks the trees from sending water to the tree tops and limbs, causing wilting and death in two months.

This disease, called laurel wilt, already has spread to nine southeastern states and could potentially wipe out the \$468 million avocado business in California.

Previous beetle traps contained a lure made out of cubeb oil. Now a scientist and his team have determined exactly what components in the oil the beetles love best. The winner was *a-copaene*, which is normally found in avocado tree wood. New lures containing 50 percent *a-copaene* attracted two to three times more beetles compared to the old traps.

— *Sarah McQuate*

Rainfall year is off to a wet start, but some areas remain in drought

Last month was the second-wettest October on record for the Northern Sierra, according the state water officials.

Though some harvests were slowed by the ample precipitation, state farmers are encouraged by the beginning of the 2016-17 rainfall season, according to Christine Souza of the California Federal Farm Bureau.

At this time last year, 50% of California was affected by drought, compared 20% today. Parts of Southern California are still experiencing severe drought, so

officials are cautious about declaring an end to the state's continuing drought.

Heading into winter, forecasters are tentatively predicting a La Niña weather pattern instead of last year's heavy-rainfall El Niño, but aren't certain what that means for California's rainfall this season.

— *Aylin Woodward*

Foraging on late-maturing oats makes for healthier dairy cows

Wisconsin dairy farmers have a new way for their cows to get proper nutrition in the fall, according to Dennis O'Brien in the November 2016 issue of *AgResearch* Magazine.

Starting in early- to mid-August, these farmers plant oat crops and allow cows to graze through mid-November.

Researchers compared the kind of oats and the timing of grazing on cow growth. They found that late-maturing oats have higher quality forage compared to an early-maturing variety and that that cows put out to graze in late September gained twice as much weight per day compared to cows put out to graze later.

These results should be useful for California's dairy farms, which account for about 20% of U.S. milk production, according to a recent report from the University of California Agricultural Issues Center.

— *Sarah McQuate*