

Harvest resumes

Florida citrus growers say ban will have little effect

United Press International

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — The Florida citrus harvest resumed on a limited basis Tuesday in groves certified by state officials to be free of citrus canker, a contagious bacterial disease discovered in Florida last month.

On Sept. 14, the U.S. Department of Agriculture banned shipment of Florida citrus to other citrus-producing areas. On Monday, State Agricultural Commissioner Doyle Conner, moving to stop the spread of the disease within the state, halted intrastate shipments to market places — including popular roadside stands — and voided all harvest licenses.

However, Conner said new licenses will be issued as groves are found to be free of the highly conta-

gious disease that kills trees but is harmless to humans.

Inspectors moved into the groves Monday and began issuing the new licenses within hours. Authorities said the harvest ban would have little effect on the industry.

Inspectors gave a priority to lemon and lime groves in southern Florida, where the harvest was in full swing when the canker outbreak was discovered.

A few grapefruit crops and some specialty crops such as tangerines and tangelos are reaching maturity in other areas of the billion-dollar citrus belt and are being re-inspected.

Wayne Baggett of the USDA said that three groves are being harvested after being re-certified Mon-

day, and that 32 fresh fruit packing houses were in compliance with handling regulations, with 15 of those in operation.

Zeke Zaharako, vice president of J.R. Brooks & Sons, which operates lime groves and a packing house south of Miami, Tuesday said the company's groves were re-certified Monday afternoon.

"We're picking those re-certified groves today (Tuesday)," Zaharako said. "We should be back on schedule soon. We're contacting the other groves now to let them know we're back in business."

Bobby F. McKown, executive vice president of Florida Citrus Mutual, a trade association of growers, said the harvest ban would have little effect on most growers because crops

reach maturity at varying times. The start of the orange harvest is well away, McKown said.

The early and mid-season orange harvest normally begins about Nov. 1 and lasts into the spring. The harvest of late season Valencia oranges begins in April and May and lasts into early summer.

While citrus growers worked to stabilize conditions in Florida, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved the use of \$1 million to accelerate a canker research program at the University of Florida. State legislators discussed possible indemnification of growers for non-infected trees destroyed in the eradication program.

Wrongful death suit fogs Schatz trial

United Press International

HOUSTON — Concern that a wrongful death suit could harm criminal proceedings on the slaying of postal worker Debora Sue Schatz led the attorney representing the woman's mother to agree to postpone a deposition Tuesday.

Bernard Port whose son, 17, is charged with the letter carrier's murder, arrived in court from the Harris County Jail Tuesday only to learn the deposition had been postponed.

Port and his wife, Odette, have been jailed for nearly two weeks for refusing to testify to the grand jury investigating Schatz' death.

State District Judge Weldon Berry ordered the deposition to be taken and sealed Tuesday in the \$5 million

civil suit filed by Barbara Schatz. Harris County prosecutors and attorneys for the Ports asked that it be postponed and Schatz' attorney Joe Jamaal temporarily agreed.

"The state asked that we delay it because they felt it might jeopardize their position in the criminal case," Jamaal said.

The Port's counsel also asked that it be delayed for the same reason Jamaal gave.

"I agreed to study it (the Port's request) for a few days," Jamaal said. "I do not want to jeopardize the state's case or the defendant's right to a fair trial. I'm willing to listen. I'll try to be fair about it."

Jamaal said he will make a decision during the next two weeks on whether to continue postponing the

deposition.

The civil suit against the Ports seeks \$5 million in actual damages and an unspecified amount of punitive damages for the deaths of the letter carrier and her father. It contends Albert Schatz died of a heart attack brought on by grief over his daughter's June 7 killing.

Assistant District Attorney Brad Beers said he opposes the taking of the deposition because the defense in the murder case "then would have the opportunity to take depositions from all of our witnesses in the criminal case."

"We have better things to do between now and the trial than to be taking depositions every day," Beers said. "It would simply turn into a discovery tool for the defense."

As the Ports continue to resist testifying to the grand jury, time is running out for the prosecutors, who must be ready to bring the murder case to trial next week.

Beers said he will not say until Monday or early next week what prosecutors plan to do about the 120-day deadline they must meet under the Texas Speedy Trials Act.

Prosecutors have said the complete testimony is crucial to the case against David Port, who is free on a \$20,000 bond. The Ports have been in jail since Sept. 12 for contempt of a grand jury, but their attorneys' efforts to get them out of jail and their resolve is strengthening.

They have lost several appeals and arguments that they have a constitutional right not to testify against their son.

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