

The Plant Health Service confirms the presence of the pest in an orange farm in Mula

South African "cotonet" detected in Spanish Region of Murcia

On March 9, the Plant Health Service of the Region of Murcia announced the detection for the first time of South African "cotonet" (*Delottococcus aberiae*) in the region, in an orange plantation in the area of La Arboleja, in the municipality of Mula.

The Department of the Council of Agriculture suspects that its introduction in this area is due to the fact that the harvest of said plot in Mula has been previously bought and collected by companies from the Region of Valencia, "so its accidental introduction could probably be due to the presence of some specimens in the collection boxes used." They even highlight that this is how the insect mostly spreads.

The Plant Health Department came to this plot due to the alert raised by the Mula Regional Agrarian Office, which requested an investigation into the possible presence of the South African "cotonet" in it, upon detecting fruits that presented some anomalous deformities.

"Although it was initially detected on orange and mandarin trees, all citrus varieties are sensitive to its attack, although the kind and extent of the damage appear to be different, depending on the variety. In lemon trees, no damage has been reported, given the limited importance of this crop for the areas affected so far," said the Plant Health Department. "Cotonet" damage occurs from the flowering stage, affecting up to 70% of the fruits, deforming them.

How do you fight the "cotonet"?

The Plant Health Department advises the use of a natural predator that has shown promising results in trials in Valencia, and whose release was authorized by the Ministry last year:

Anagyrus aberiae. The *Cryptolaemus* mealybug is another useful predator.

Mass trapping to capture and kill the insect is another option, but the devices, like the release of natural predators, have a development and production that fails to meet current demand.

Phytosanitary treatments are another option, but they are advised to be combined with another

method of elimination. Sticky strips and other such products are also recommended, as they prevent both ants and the "cotonet" from reaching the tree tops.

Source: [laopiniondemurcia.es](https://www.laopiniondemurcia.es/comunidad/2021/03/10/plaga-cotonet-llega-citricos-region-39966410.html) (<https://www.laopiniondemurcia.es/comunidad/2021/03/10/plaga-cotonet-llega-citricos-region-39966410.html>)

Publication date: Fri 12 Mar 2021



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