

Good Communications Can Rectify Problems & Disputes



Rick Shade

It is time once again to put fingers to the keyboard and create my commentary for the latest edition of *From the Grove*. We are in the height of the California season, about halfway through both the calendar and the volume. The biggest challenge for me seems to be predicting and writing about things that haven't happened, but will be history by the time this column is actually read. One thing is for sure: spray season has started here in Santa Barbara County; the helicopters are flying and the normal hue and cry has started, though we have a new voice added to the din.

With the legalization of cannabis, many of the cut flower greenhouses in our area have been converted to cannabis production. Many of those greenhouses sit among avocado orchards. Now that the crop is legal, the authorities are testing cannabis for pesticide residue down to one part per billion. The problem is that there are no pesticides registered for use on cannabis. If any residues are found, the crop must be destroyed. Given this scenario, the cannabis growers don't want helicopters anywhere near the greenhouses. We have formed a group of avocado growers, cannabis growers and pesticide applicators to come up with a solution to

the problem.

As a licensed pest control advisor, pesticide residues are a continuous concern for me. I was very interested to read an article on the topic in the *Progressive Crop Consultant* magazine. The article cited statistics from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation from 2016, the most recent year available. A total of 3,585 produce samples were tested for pesticide residues — 24 percent of those produce samples were grown in California. The great news is that 96 percent of all produce tested either had no pesticide residue detected or residues within the legal tolerances. The greatest majority of produce with illegal residues was imported from off-shore producers, though bok choy from the United States also was an offender. The good news here is that tree fruits from the United States in general, and avocados in particular, did not have pesticide residue issues.

The message I am trying to convey is really about communication. In this day and age it is imperative to keep open lines of communication with your neighbors, even your fellow farmers. Good lines of communication will help avoid problems and disputes down the road. We also should be communicating as good stewards of our crops. When

talking to our off-farm friends and neighbors, take advantage of the opportunity to communicate the good news about the lack of pesticide residues, even in conventionally-grown crops, on what we grow here in California.

We have just finished California Avocado Month on the West Coast. Jan DeLyser and her team have had some wonderful promotions up and down the coast. Truly innovative food hall events were held in Los Angeles and Portland, celebrating our California avocados. My favorite ways to eat avocados are with a little salt or a little lime juice. I am truly amazed, and my palate surprised, every time I attend an event that showcases new and creative uses of our fruit. The flavor combinations and exceptional presentations are truly stunning, showcasing our fruit beautifully.

Those are the avocado topics that come to my mind at this point in time. As usual I will leave you with a thought, this one from Thomas Jefferson. This quote should ring true with every farmer reading this column. "When facing a long day of work, be sure to choose the tool with the smoothest handle." As someone who started his career in the business by hoeing weeds I can say truer words were never spoken. 🍷