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## *Save the Date*

BC Strawberry Growers Association

Annual General Meeting is scheduled for

March 24th, 2022

at 1:00 PM



The meeting will be held via zoom, registration is required and the link will be sent out on March 10th. If you don't received it please email [info@bcstrawberries.com](mailto:info@bcstrawberries.com)

## *2022 Fresh Strawberry Campaign*



Our BuyBC application has been approved! So, we would like to begin working on the details of the 2022 Fresh Strawberry Campaign, and would appreciate your input on anything you would like to see included in the campaign. Please email the Association office to let us know.

Since our funding is contingent on growers participation, we would appreciate your confirmation to participate in the fresh promotions portion of the campaign this year, please contact Lisa at the BC Strawberries office to discuss (604-864-0565) or to get your name on the list, email the office at... [info@bcstrawberries.com](mailto:info@bcstrawberries.com).

\*\*Deadline for participation is March 31st



## *Board of Directors*

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## Profiling a New Research Initiative on the Strawberry Blossom Weevil

by: Dr. Eric Gerbrandt, and Dr. Michelle Franklin (AAFC)

**By Eric Gerbrandt:** In October, we hosted a fourth annual joint BC Berries Research Review, and for the second time we opted to use a virtual webinar format. This two-day event covered topics including berry breeding, variety trials, entomology, pathology, horticultural management, fruit quality, and climate change mitigation research. Overall, it was a great event for communicating recent research results with growers and other industry stakeholders. One of the beneficial side effects of having to shift to online events has been an increase in participation from people in other regions. At this event, we had attendees from Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Washington, and Oregon, which allowed for additional cross-pollination of ideas between research groups.

I'd like to take the opportunity through this newsletter article to emphasize a project that was presented during the entomology session by Dr. Michelle Franklin and her Ph.D. Candidate, Warren Wong, who is co-supervised by Dr. Juli Carrillo at the University of British Columbia. Michelle is the Berry Entomologist at the Agassiz Research and Development Centre, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). She started her position with AAFC in July of 2020, which was around the same time that the newly invasive strawberry blossom weevil began to be widely found in the Fraser Valley after initial sightings in the previous year. It was very fortuitous that Michelle started her job at AAFC at the time that she did, as she was immediately available to begin working on this new pest, collaborating with several others, including Dr. Paul Abram at AAFC, Tracy Hueppelsheuser with the Ministry of Agriculture, and the IPM scouts at E.S. Cropconsult Ltd.

**Fast forward a few months**, and Michelle obtained some funding from within AAFC to initiate a project to tackle this new challenge. I'll hand the second half of this article over to Michelle so that she can describe her plans for the next few years.

**By Michelle Franklin:** These are exciting times! This spring my co-lead, Jesse MacDonald and I started research to address the immediate threat of the strawberry blossom weevil to the small fruit industry. We are taking a modern pro-active pest management approach, known as biovigilance that is built on a continuum of six steps including: (1) **awareness** of the threat, (2) **detection/identification**, (3) **assessment** through standardized surveillance, (4) **understanding** the biology of the pest, (5) **mitigation** using clean technologies, and (6) **appropriateness** where monitoring is used to look for unintended effects and future threats. This approach aims to leverage the diverse expertise of a large multi-disciplinary team from federal and provincial government departments and agencies, industry commodity groups, and academia. We have assembled a team of over 35 collaborators, including experts in entomology, taxonomy, biocontrol, plant ecology, data management, and communication to address the first four steps in the continuum over the next three years.

Photos courtesy of Warren Wong



## Profiling a New Research Initiative on the Strawberry Blossom Weevil, Cont'd

by: Dr. Eric Gerbrandt, and Dr. Michelle Franklin (AAFC)

Our work so far has built awareness (step 1) through field monitoring of the strawberry blossom weevil in the Fraser Valley where we have determined that it is established on cultivated plants such as strawberries and raspberries and wild plants like Himalayan blackberry, wild roses, and thimbleberry. We also discovered a natural enemy (parasitic wasp) in BC that feeds on and kills the weevil larvae developing inside of the damaged buds. We are currently working to develop novel identification tools (step 2) for the weevil and natural enemies, making use of molecular methods while preserving the specimens for expert identification by taxonomists. We are preparing for a large-scale surveillance effort that will take place over the 2022 field season to assess (step 3) the distribution of this weevil across Canada. This winter we are developing a standardized sampling plan and a new data collection app to support survey efforts by collaborators across the country from AAFC and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as well as provincial specialists, crop consultants, university researchers, and growers.

We have also welcomed two graduate students that are co-supervised by myself and Dr. Juli Carrillo from the Faculty of Land and Food Systems at the University of British Columbia to the project! Warren Wong (PhD student) is working to improve our understanding of the relationship between the timing of plants stages (buds, flowers, fruit) and the development of the weevil. Jade Sherwood (MSc student) is working with our international partner, the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) in Switzerland, where she spent the summer to understand the natural enemy complex that attacks strawberry blossom weevil. This work could help to develop mitigation strategies built on biological control in the future. Lastly, we are using models to predict the potential for the spread of this pest across North America under current and future climate change scenarios.

**My co-lead, Jesse MacDonald**, is a Knowledge Technology Transfer specialist at AAFC and is working to identify communication gaps among researchers, agencies, and stakeholders as well as to strengthen communication channels. We look forward to sharing new knowledge of the strawberry blossom weevil from this project through extension materials, grower field days, and presentations. If you have any questions related to the strawberry blossom weevil, please contact me at [michelle.franklin@agr.gc.ca](mailto:michelle.franklin@agr.gc.ca).



Photo courtesy of Warran Wong

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## Spring 2022 Online Auction

FARM &  
EQUIPMENT

Equipment Drop Off & Late Consignment:  
8AM - 5PM March 28th, 29th, 30th @  
Heritage Park Chilliwack

Selling Online April 1st starting @10AM

[beekmanauctions.com](http://beekmanauctions.com)

### *Benefits of Membership with the BCSGA*

The BC Strawberry Growers Association is very active in promoting BC's strawberry industry, making sure that it remains vibrant. This is done through numerous programs that are funded through levies producers pay on their strawberry production. Fresh levies are remitted directly to the Association, on Farm Gate/Direct sales, while processed levies are remitted by the processor to the BC Vegetable Commission who forwards these funds to the Association. Here is some of what the Association does and why growers can benefit by belonging.

#### The Association.....

1. Negotiates the **annual processing price** processors pay for strawberries purchased from growers.
2. Collects levies from fresh strawberry producers at the rate of \$0.075 cents per pound.
3. **Manages the *Strawberry Industry Development Trust Fund*, that is used to support eligible industry activities.** *These projects include:* research, grower education, promotion and market development.
4. **Participates in the National setting of priorities for the approval of new pesticides for all applications.**
5. **Organizes a "*Fresh BC Strawberries*" promotion campaign** generating fantastic support from the media. Radio interviews, on-site TV coverage, newspaper pictures & stories. Active campaigns on 2-3 Social Media platforms help to assist in bringing public awareness of the local strawberry industry throughout BC, with active contests that encourage and reward participation.
6. Works closely with berry breeders and other scientists testing new cultivars to identify varieties that are adapted to BC's climate and environment, thus enabling *members* to have access to the most current innovative varieties. **Funding research projects** to develop unique and economical production techniques for new and standard varieties using your levy dollars.
7. Has direct access to the Ministry of Agriculture, Berry Industry Specialist who supplies us with the most current information regarding new pests and other matters related to Strawberries. Provides this current and critical information to growers on invasive pests like Spotted Wing Drosophila. Is available to growers if there are production problems or other concerns, with the assistance of Breeders and Researchers.

... all of this is made possible because growers pay levies on their processed and fresh strawberry production. We encourage you to join the BC Strawberry Growers Association, pay levies on your strawberry production and help the BC strawberry industry to thrive, remain current and vibrant.

Call the office for further information 604-864-0565

