



Standing room only at CAC's inaugural field day at Pine Tree Ranch in Santa Paula, Calif.

Inaugural Field Day Demonstrates Overwhelming Support and Interest in CAC's Outreach Efforts

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By all conceivable standards, the California Avocado Commission's (CAC) January 23 inaugural field day at the Pine Tree Ranch Demonstration Grove in Santa Paula was a success. Consider this. It was standing-room-only for more than 100 industry stakeholders who participated in the learning session. Growers remained long after the conclusion of the event to network with fellow industry members. The presentations and in-grove demonstrations were informative and well received. And the presence of growers, stakeholders and members of Cal Poly Pomona were indicative of the widespread enthusiasm, interest and support for the Commission's outreach efforts.

Field Day Synopsis

The inaugural field day began with a welcome address from CAC President Tom Bellamore. During his opening remarks Bellamore noted that the Commission is committed to doing everything possible to keep the California avocado industry vibrant, progressive and prosperous for California avocado growers. "Pine Tree Ranch will give CAC an opportunity to test different planting and management techniques, and will add to the toolbox of vital information that we provide," said Bellamore.

Cal Poly Pomona Professor and Chair of Plant Sciences Valerie Mellano then reiterated the University's commit-



Dr. Carol Lovatt discusses differences in California avocado shoot growth

ment to partnering with CAC to provide industry outreach through the Pine Tree Ranch Demonstration Grove project. Following the welcoming addresses, two leaders in the

field of avocado research from the University of California, Riverside, gave presentations to the attendees. Dr. Carol Lovatt from the Botany and Plant Sciences Department discussed fertilizer strategies and how to make the best management decisions based on the previous year's crop load, current crop and bloom potential. Dr. Akif Eskalen from the Plant Pathology Department discussed orchard sanitation for disease control. If you missed the field day, copies of the presentation materials are available on the California avocado grower website, www.CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com.

Following the formal presentations, attendees took part in an in-grove pruning demonstration led by CAC's Research Project Manager Dr. Tim Spann and CAC Board members Doug O'Hara and Bradley Miles. During the in-grove portion of the field day, Drs. Eskalen and Lovatt were available for more in depth and intimate discussion with growers regarding pruning and fertilizer strategies.

Demonstration Grove Developments

Much has been accomplished at the Commission's Pine Tree Ranch Demonstration Grove since formally leasing the acreage in July 2013. Nine acres of lemon trees were



California avocado in-grove demonstrations reinforced the importance of sanitation while pruning



CAC Vice Chairman Doug O'Hara assisted in leading California avocado in-grove pruning demonstrations



removed and converted to mulch to make way for avocado plantings. And the development plan completed by the Pine Tree Ranch Demonstration Grove advisory group — consisting of Cal Poly representatives, California avocado growers and grove managers — is now in place. The plan calls for plantings of different densities, rootstocks and varieties to show California avocado growers how different options can affect tree growth, yield, fruit quality and grove management. (See *From the Grove*, Winter 2013 for complete plan details.)

In the next few months, several other key developments will take place. Land prep and irrigation installation in the currently undeveloped nine acres is underway, with completion expected early in the spring. Avocado trees slated for the undeveloped nine acres, as outlined in the development plan, have been ordered with the first shipments expected to arrive in late spring/early summer 2014. It is anticipated that the first of CAC's new trees will be in the ground within the next four months, allowing them time to get established and minimize their susceptibility to any possible frost next winter.

Upcoming Field Days

The Commission's demonstration grove is an integral part of CAC's production research program. "All CAC-funded research projects are now required to have an outreach component," said Dr. Spann. "Pine Tree Ranch is the ideal venue for demonstrating cultural management practices, testing rootstock and fruit varieties, and evaluating equipment that may be of interest to growers. This project is completely driven by grower need."

CAC will host two field day sessions at Pine Tree Ranch in the near future designed around the seasonal demands of California avocado groves. The first of these field days is scheduled for Thursday, March 27 at 10:00 a.m. and will focus on irrigation and pest monitoring. In late spring/early summer, CAC will host another field day that provides a hands-on demonstration regarding planting techniques for new avocado trees. Stay tuned to the grower website and *The Greensheet* for further details regarding these upcoming field days and seminar materials. 🥑

Dr. Akif Eskalen explains pruning best practices during California avocado in-grove demonstrations