

MIGRATORY LOCUSTS MAY INVADE CROP FARMING AREAS

All farmers need to be on high alert for the emergence of the brown locust (migratory locust) in the Northern Cape Karoo and Kalahari, the southern and western Free State, the Eastern Cape Karoo and savannah areas and the Kalahari areas of the Northwest Province. Small to medium flying swarms of brown locusts are aggregating in the central Karoo and have spilled over to the adjoining areas of the Free State.

Whilst the Department of Agriculture is expending all efforts to control the hopper bands, it is likely that the magnitude of the brown locust outbreak will increase, especially if it rains over the central and northern Karoo, Bushmanland, Namaqualand and the southern Kalahari.

Any person who sees hopper bands or flying locust swarms must report such observations immediately to the Department of Agriculture's locust office in De Aar on 053 631 3122 or 053 631 3261. Travelers often report seeing "red ants" crossing tar roads in the Karoo; those are locusts that have just hatched and are a dull reddish colour. They grow rapidly and by their fourth instar develop wings. In their fifth instar they fly and aggregate to form large swarms. The Department of Agriculture's objective is to focus on hopper bands because only small amounts of pyrethroid insecticides are used to control them with very limited, if any, damage to the sensitive ecology where locusts normally breed.

Only the Department of Agriculture may acquire the insecticides that are registered to control the brown locust. The department is mandated by the Agricultural Pests Act, No. 36 of 1983 to manage brown locust outbreaks. It is therefore important that farmers report outbreaks to the department. Farmers can manually control the hatchlings and hopper bands by running flocks of sheep over them or by pulling a large tyre over them behind a vehicle.

There are many other grasshopper species that are hatching now. Farmers and members of the public are encouraged to take pictures of such grasshoppers and send it to the CropLife SA emergency number 082-446-8946 for species identification and advice. Most grasshopper species other than the brown locust do virtually no real crop or veld damage, hence control is not required. The national focus should be on the brown locust to prevent the outbreak developing into a disaster like in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan with the desert locust. South African crop farmers can ill afford an invasion of the brown locusts into cash crops and it is therefore important for all citizens to play a role in keeping a close watch on this species over the next four months.

For more information please contact:

Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, Operations and Stewardship Manager, CropLife South Africa
gerhard@croplife.co.za, 082 446 8946

CROPLIFE SOUTH AFRICA

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

310 Lougardia Building, c/o Hendrik Verwoerd drive & Embankment road, Centurion, 0157

CONTACT DETAILS:

+27 (0)87 940 4168 | info@croplife.co.za