

FEATURE – USDA STUDIES CITRUS DISEASES AND FOOD SAFETY

INTRO: USDA researchers are studying how to defeat bacteria that could make us a sick and bacteria that can make plants sick. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more from Winter Haven, Florida. (1:21) (refeed from 3/08)

U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RESEARCHERS ARE STUDYING TWO PROBLEMS AFFECTING FLORIDA'S VALUABLE CITRUS INDUSTRY. CANKER AND FOOD BACTERIA. CITRUS CANKER IN FLORIDA IS A BIG PROBLEM BECAUSE IT PREVENTS FRUIT FROM BEING SHIPPED OUT OF THE STATE. U-S-D-A AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE SCIENTISTS IN WINTER HAVEN FLORIDA ARE STUDYING THE CANKER PROBLEM.

Jan Narciso, Research Microbiologist, USDA ARS: There's no way to stop it from spreading at this point. That's why there are so many scientists in Florida working on it.

A-R-S RESEARCHERS SAY CANKER IS AN ECONOMIC AS WELL AS BOTANICAL PROBLEM.

Narciso: It's gets on the fruit and causes big sores on the fruit so cosmetically the fruits are not marketable although they are still edible and can be juiced. But over time the trees will be weakened and killed by this disease.

WHILE THEY HAVE YET TO CONTROL CANKER, A-R-S HAS MADE PROGRESS IN THE FRESH CUT FRUIT AREA. RESEARCHERS HAVE COME UP WITH A NATURAL SANITIZER PROCESSORS CAN USE TO KILL BACTERIA ON FRUIT PEEL SO THEY DON'T GET ON THE CUT FRUIT PIECES.

Narciso: If they don't clean it properly when they peel it and cut it everything that is on the peel is going to end up on those little cut fruit pieces. We want to add a natural product that's anti-microbial that will kill the bacteria. If we can incorporate that in the coating then even the bacteria that are hiding won't survive.

FLORIDA'S CITRUS INDUSTRY IS WORTH AROUND TEN BILLION DOLLARS I'M BOB ELLISON FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN WINTER HAVEN FLORIDA.