**University of California ≈ Cooperative Extension**

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Pomology Notes

**E-mail Extra: July 23, 2009**

*Franz Niederholzer, UCCE Farm Advisor, Sutter/Yuba Counties*

**Current Information on Sutter/County ‘French’ Prune Harvest, 2009**

*Franz Niederholzer, UC Farm Advisor, Sutter/Yuba Counties*

**Thursday, July 23, 2009**

Pressures and sugars were checked in four mature, well maintained ‘French’ prune blocks around Sutter/Yuba Counties.

Pressures averaged from 8.3 to over 10 pounds. Almost all the fruit is now less than 11 pounds in these blocks.

Sugars ranged from 15.5% to 18% soluble solids. All blocks showed a sugar increase of 1.5%, a little less than the 2%/week that is expected. Large crops and very hot weather are factors in slower than average sugar accumulation.

**Growers are urged to check pressures in each orchard as early as late July to best prepare for a high quality harvest.** Fruit pressure testing is the best way to test fruit maturity and plan harvest. Optimum prune harvest timing is when fruit is between 3-4 pounds fruit pressure. When sampling fruit for maturity testing, look for late season pests – especially **brown rot**, rust, and mites.

On average, fruit pressures generally drop 1-2 pounds per week, while sugars increase about 2% per week. Using a 1.5 pound pressure drop per week, the softest block in this survey would be at 3.8 pounds pressure by around August 13. The blocks that I checked that are currently around 10 pounds would reach 4 pounds on August 20.

Cooler weather results in a relatively rapid pressure drop, while hot weather slows the rate of fruit softening. Long-term weather forecasts (<http://www.accuweather.com>) suggest warm to hot weather for the next two weeks. Highs are predicted in the lower 90’s to low 100’s. Lows are predicted to range from 60-67oF.

When planning harvest timing, growers must balance fruit sugar, fruit firmness, equipment availability and dryer space to maximize their income while delivering a high quality product.