

Netting Tight Enough To Keep Out Fruit Flies

Super fine netting from Berry Protection Solutions keeps out even tiny pests like the dreaded Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD), a commonly-known type of fruit fly. They have devastated many soft fruit operations, including berry, cherry and even plum. Dalella Riggs lost 40 percent of her blueberry crop before she discovered ExcludeNet from Tek-Knit Industries.

"SWD didn't show up in New York State where we farm until 2011," says Riggs. "By 2012 it hit our blueberries, and we would have lost 90 percent of our raspberries if we hadn't sprayed every few days."

Unlike other fruit flies that attack over-ripe fruit or rotting fruit, the SWD lays eggs in fruit as it is ripening on the plant. Emerging maggots spoil the fruit and prevent sales.

In an effort to avoid constant spraying, Riggs started looking for other options. With the help of a SARE (Sustainable Ag Research and Education) grant, she tried ExcludeNet from Quebec-based Tek-Knit Industries in 2014. Over the past 5 years she has refined how she uses it. Today she has netting over hoops to protect a full half acre of blueberries and some raspberries as well. Benefits have been huge.

"Four out of the past 5 years I've harvested my highest-yielding crops," says Riggs. "Oregon and Washington producers typically have the highest production, and mine were higher. In 2017 I harvested and marketed more than 6,800 lbs. Riggs credits the netting in part for her high yields. The tight netting with a single airlock entry door keeps out the SWD. She feels the netting also reduces weather stress on the plants.

"We had no weather-related losses despite 3 hailstorms and multiple thunderstorms with high winds," says Riggs. "The netting diffuses the wind and rain."

When the owner of Tek-Knit visited Riggs' farm, he suggested that since she knew the product so well, she should sell it. She and



ExcludeNet is a super fine netting that's tight enough to keep out even the tiniest pests.

her husband took him up on the idea. They are now the U.S. distributor. She sells mainly to market gardeners and professional growers. ExcludeNet is available in 6 1/2 and 13-ft. rolls of 80 gram per meter material. The company also makes a 60-gram netting for excluding larger insect pests.

"The 13-ft. by 328-ft. roll sells for \$550 plus shipping," says Riggs. "Netting edges can be sewn together for an additional \$220 per seam."

Riggs mounts 26-ft. wide panels over multiple sets of hoops to protect her blueberries. She uses wire lock channels and Spring Lock (wiggle wire) to hold the panels in place. She lays panel edges over the wire lock channels followed by a strip of greenhouse plastic over the panel edges before installing the wiggle wire to hold the panels and plastic in place.

The netting has a 5-year warranty against degradation and weathering, but Riggs suggests a life of at least 7 years.

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Rust Control Product Also Deters Rodents

For the past 30 years Bob Lawrie and his son Greg have built a franchised corrosion protection business that now has operations across the U.S. and Canada. Now, the company has discovered that their product also has rodent-protecting benefits.

"We have a lot of customers who store vehicles and equipment for an extended time and one of the biggest problems they have is rodents," says Lawrie. "The critters chew wires, seats, insulation, defecate everywhere and create a real stink. Cleanup is costly."

Lawrie says a bus customer alerted him to the extent of the rodent problem, and the fact their Pro Fleet Care rust control product also repels rodents. "This customer had a fleet of 1,200 buses stored in a grassy area during the summer. Following the rust control treatment, he said the rodents left the stored buses alone.

"Our environmentally friendly product contains ingredients that act as a repellent," Lawrie says. "I think the product interferes with how mice groom and clean themselves, which is similar to cats. They get the product on their paws, then lick their paws to clean their hair coats, and the product interferes with that grooming routine without killing the rodents."

Based on the bus company's success with deterring rodents, Lawrie theorized that farmers could prevent rodent damage to combines, tractors, motorhomes, antique vehicles and any items that attract rodents



Pro Fleet Care says its rust proofing products contain ingredients that also repel rodents.

during storage. "Combines stored for the winter often have the perfect environment for rodent nests, including food for the winter."

Lawrie cited a Wisconsin farmer who discovered rodents had chewed several wires on a 300-hp. tractor, which cost \$7,000 to repair. "That was a costly loss that might have been prevented with the Pro Fleet Care rust control product that also repels rodents," Lawrie says.

Aerosol cans of the product sell for \$14 a piece plus shipping, or \$144 for a case of 12; 5-gal. pails are \$220 plus shipping.

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Gary Nye used tracks from an old sliding barn door to make this simple lift. Metal platform rides on wheels inside tracks.

Simple Lift Brings Loads Up Basement Stairs

Hauling heavy wine jugs up the basement stairs was what got Gary Nye of Landisburg, Penn., looking for an easier way to haul heavy bottles weighing 50 to 60 lbs. each up the stairs. "We usually have about 8 jugs going at once that we store in the basement. Every 2 or 3 months they have to come upstairs to be racked off or bottled. As I'm getting older it's not getting easier. I needed something to do the lifting for me," says Nye, who has a small vineyard.

He used tracks from an old sliding barn door. The tracks are turned upside down, resting on the stairs with a steel platform riding on wheels in the tracks. The platform is built to the angle of the stairs so that it's level. The surface was painted with rubberized paint to keep things from sliding.

To make the sled he used a 440 lb. overhead hoist purchased online which came with 39 ft. of cable. Pulleys were then purchased at Tractor Supply Company locally. The sled was made from two pieces of 12 by 18-in. plate steel with hinges welded on the short sides so they could be fine tuned to the angle of the stairs once installed. He bored out and threaded two pieces of round stock and welded them upright between the plates, then threaded a 3/8-in. bolt into each of them that the top plate rests on. It adjusts so the top plate is supported by resting on the bolt heads. Nye drilled holes and mounted hanging door hardware to the underside that fits into the rails. The rails lay upside down on the stairs and are kept parallel with 5/8-in. threaded rod at each end.

The hoist fit under the tracks on the bottom basement step. It is held in place with an



Electric hoist fits under tracks on bottom basement step.

L-bracket attached to the threaded rod that runs parallel with the tracks. The rods at both ends also hold a pulley, and there is a pulley mounted to the underside of the sled. At the top of the two rails, two angled brackets are lag bolted into the top step with the rod passing through them.

He mounted a switch for the hoist on the wall near the bottom of the stairs. The rails are offset to one side, leaving room for the stairs to be used normally.

He has been using the lift for several months now and says it's a huge help. "My wife uses it all the time. She sets a basket on it and uses it for all sorts of things." He has tested it to move over 250 lbs. with no problems.

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