

## OBSERVATIONS OF AVOCADOS IN SOUTH AFRICA

### Marvin Miller

*Marvin Miller, Farm Advisor, Riverside County, was a tour leader for a group visiting citrus plantings in Egypt, South Africa and Australia.*

While on a citrus growers' tour in April 1967, we visited Evinrond, the farm of Mr. L. E. Leon near Tzaneen, South Africa. He has been a member of California Avocado Society for many years. He has 220 acres of avocados and some additional acreage planted to eucalyptus for wood pulp production. Rainfall near Tzaneen varies from 35 inches per year in the low areas to 60 inches or more in the higher elevations.



Carton of avocados prepared for shipment. L. E. Leon, Evinrond Estate.

At Evinrond the Fuerte is the principal variety. There are, however, some trees of the Edranol, Hass, Linda and Ryan varieties, and selected local varieties which are popular. Mr. Leon commented that their local market likes the green fruit and prefers the larger sizes. Small fruit brings a lower return. Their first plantings were on Mexican seedling rootstock like California but now they are using the Guatemalan rootstocks.

About 60% of their fruit is sold locally and 40% shipped to Europe. Exports to Europe go by air, mostly to France and England. Shipping season for Fuertes is from March to October. They have multiple blooming and a long picking season. The Edranol season is August to October. Since the Israel shipments start in October they ship less fruit after that time.



From left: Frank Noyes and Jim Topham, California avocado growers, and Richard Lancefield inspecting root rot infected tree with sawdust treatment just started. Evenrond Estate.



Roy Lewis, Orange County avocado grower, inspecting Fuerte avocado crop of L. E. Leon planting near, Tzaneen, South Africa.

Mr. Leon commented that "Avocado Root Rot has been their nemesis." Field trials suggested by Richard Lancefield, his partner, have given a good response to this disease. By applying a six inch mulch of sawdust and chips around the tree they have been able to bring declining trees back into production. Their experience indicates that after a tree shows symptoms of this disease they can apply the mulch and expect the tree to be back in production in two years. Young trees replanted in the root rot infected soil will not grow if the mulch is applied at the time of planting. However, if the mulch is applied six months before planting, the little trees will grow well.



From left: Frank Noyes and Jim Topham, California Avocado growers, and Richard Lancefield inspecting tree treated with sawdust and recovered from root rot. Evenrond Estate.



Packing House. L. E. Leon, Evenrond Estate, Tzaneen, South Africa.

There is an increasing interest in avocados in the higher elevations around Tzaneen because the greening disease has seriously reduced orange production in those areas. This disease is spread by an insect, a psyllid, which occurs in heavier populations in those sections. The avocado is not affected by this disease.