

# **PRUNING FLOWERS AND FRUIT TO REDUCE IRREGULAR BEARING IN NEW ZEALAND**

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Pruning is now carried out on many avocado orchards in New Zealand to regulate cropping. Due to the uncertainty of flowering and fruit set, some growers will wait until after fruit set before deciding if crop reduction is warranted to prevent over-cropping. The effect of delaying this decision is poorly understood. NZ Avocado and Plant & Food Research established a trial to better understand how the timing of pruning to reduce flower and crop load effects the final outcome in terms of improving cropping consistency. Results will be presented from three orchards where flowers and fruitlets were removed from trees deemed to have excessive flowering or fruit set. Pruning was carried out on dates ranging from October until February (mid-spring through to mid-summer). The pruning consisted of removing 5% to 60% of the flowers or fruit from the trees deemed to have an excessive flower or fruit set. The experiment was designed in randomized blocks with single tree plots. All trees were in commercial orchards in the Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand. Removing flowers and fruit before the end of December resulted in an estimated net positive financial return compared to unpruned trees. This was the result of increased fruit size in the first year and a significantly greater yield in the second year. The strongest return flowering was observed in the earliest pruning treatment and was reduced with the later pruning treatments.