

Dear members of the search committee,

My name is Austin N Fife, and I believe that my experience working with natural enemies, psyllids, and chemical ecology makes me a good candidate as a Postdoctoral Research Associate.

Over the past six years, I have designed and orchestrated multiple field trials, as well as lab experiments to protect row crops and ornamentals from psyllids, mites, and the pathogens they vector. The majority of my research focused on integrating different management methods to control pests with natural enemies, plant defenses, and sanitation measures. I relied on chemical ecology methods to determine predator attraction to plant volatiles, hoping to improve predatory efficiency or develop chemical lures. I also have experience working with psyllids, when I studied the fecundity and behavior of *Bactericera cockerelli* during my MS. I created/maintained various insect and mite colonies, as well as growing hundreds of plants from an eclectic variety of species. I have assisted in detecting plant pathogens by following protocols for PCR, qPCR and RPA, so I am certain I could learn gut content analysis in short order. I have an enthusiasm for statistical programming in R, which I have enjoyed over the past six years. I have a current pesticide applicator license, and valid drivers license for Florida.

I take a multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving, accordingly, I have collaborated as frequently as possible to learn from others. I have benefited from the combined expertise of over 15 principal investigators from regional universities, as well as state and governmental agencies. Furthermore, working at Research and Education Centers over the last six years has helped me to understand the needs of different organizations: I have spoken at 4-H and local rosarian clubs, presented to stakeholders, published technical reports, organized and led educational activities, set up information booths and participated in various other STEM events to share our research with local communities. I also speak, read, and write Spanish fluently, due to living independently in Mexico for a few years, and I appreciate interacting with diversified communities. I also understand the importance of maintaining a positive lab culture while working with and supervising technical staff: I was a visiting student researcher in Georgia for a year, so I would be gone for days working on independent projects while lab technicians back in Florida followed my protocols and standard operating procedures.

I have written extension articles, journal articles, proposals, and received a few small grants as described in my CV. I speak consistently at annual professional meetings by various scientific organizations, in person and online, including oral and poster sessions. I am first author on two publications in peer-reviewed journals, and I am finalizing a manuscript in review with ten collaborators, which has been accepted with minor revisions. I expect to finish 2-3 more publications in the near future.

In conclusion, I am confident that my expertise with natural enemies of stylet-feeding pests and chemical ecology makes me a suitable candidate for this position.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

– Austin Nathaniel Fife