



## AGRICULTURAL PESTS AND DISEASES

### *Background*

Under the authority of the Plant Protection Act and the Animal Health Protection Act, USDA guards against the entry of foreign pests and diseases by monitoring plant and animal health throughout the world and setting effective agricultural import policies. USDA and the Department of Homeland Security enforce these policies cooperatively. Additionally, USDA designs and conducts offshore pre-clearance programs to help mitigate the risk posed by foreign agricultural products before their arrival at U.S. ports of entry.

USDA works cooperatively with the States on programs to identify and survey for pests and diseases of concern and conduct control and eradication programs. Additionally, USDA monitors and regulates interstate shipment of plants, animals, and related materials to prevent the spread of pests and diseases to previously unaffected areas. Working in concert with local and State officials, USDA provides on-the-ground support in responding to pest or disease outbreaks.

A few examples of pest and disease activities include:

#### Avian Influenza

USDA has worked to prevent the introduction of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) into the United States and ensure preparedness in the event of an outbreak. USDA is stockpiling additional vaccines, enhancing surveillance and diagnostic activities, increasing smuggling intervention and trade compliance activities, conducting investigations, carrying out research and development, administering planning and preparedness training, and conducting various activities internationally to combat the virus.

#### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)

USDA is strongly committed to protecting U.S. animal and public health from bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE. For more than 15 years, the Federal Government has had in place a number of interlocking safeguards to protect animal and public health in the United States from this disease. This approach is science based and has been updated in accordance with recommendations made by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). USDA has been surveying for the disease for more than a decade, with approximately 800,000 samples tested and only three positives. The results to date support the view that the BSE risk in the United States continues to be very low.

### Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

This exotic foreign pest has infested and killed an estimated 20 million ash trees in the United States. It was first detected in southeast Michigan in 2002 and in an adjacent area in Canada. Infestations were subsequently detected in Ohio and Indiana. USDA has been cooperating with affected States since May 2003 to address EAB.

### Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB)

ALB is a wood-boring beetle that was discovered in New York and Illinois in the late 1990s and in New Jersey in 2002. The USDA ALB program uses an area-wide pest management strategy for eradication that integrates visual survey, control through tree removal and chemical treatment, regulatory activities to prevent pest spread, replanting of removed trees with nonhost species, and public outreach.

### Glassy-winged Sharp Shooter (GWSS)

GWSS is the insect that carries Pierce's disease, a lethal grapevine infection that has existed in California for decades. Since FY 2000, USDA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) have conducted a GWSS research and control program to reduce GWSS populations without significantly impacting agricultural production areas. Cooperatively, USDA and CDFA conduct regulatory activities, nursery stock inspections, a statewide survey, urban treatments, and public outreach.

## ***General Opinions Expressed***

- More attention in general should be placed on animal health threats and disease issues, including implementation of more livestock and crop disease prevention and eradication programs and continued Federal financial support.
- Participants expressed concern about avian influenza, expressing support for national poultry improvement programs, research, and indemnities for high- and low-pathogen avian influenza.
- Some participants think beef processing plants should be allowed to test all cows for BSE in order to regain entry into international markets.
- Some expressed appreciation for the way the Secretary has handled recent BSE situations.
- Some expressed concern about the reluctance of particularly the Asian markets to reopen their borders to our beef cattle industry.
- Many expressed the need for more prevention, control, and eradication of invasive species. This view was especially strong in Hawaii.
- A clear and workable State and Federal cooperative program for detecting and eradicating foreign pests and weeds was suggested.
- Some participants proposed stricter agricultural trade enforcement and penalties to prevent entry of invasive species.
- Many participants suggested amending the Plant Protection Act to bolster Federal capabilities for preventing the introduction of plants and pests.
- Some requested help for the citrus industry to eradicate citrus canker.
- Many onion growers requested funding for research for Iris Yellow Spot Virus.

- Some suggested strengthening USDA by adding more personnel and funding to address the backlog of phytosanitary issues and increasing our border patrols to ensure that we are not importing pests into our country.
- Many wanted increased attention to forest health in the next farm bill, particularly in regard to losing forest species to disease.
- Products such as beef and poultry face increasing concerns of BSE and avian viruses. Some commenters wanted the farm bill to provide incentives to producers who practice Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) or similar food-safety-enhancing methods.

### *Detailed Suggestions Expressed*

- Include line item funding for disease control and related surveillance programs for poultry.
- Consider flock insurance for the chick and pullet replacements in the noncontiguous States that have inadequate access to commercial hatcheries in the event of disease outbreaks or natural disasters.
- Give attention to the threat of avian influenza to our Nation, specifically to Hawaiian farms and the Hawaiian egg industry, because of proximity to Asia.
- Calculate indemnity assistance for Hawaiian producers based on their costs of production--not on average costs for the mainland U.S. industry.
- Establish a farm bill program to control weeds on Indian reservations.
- Continue to fund States to do surveillance work for avian influenza.
- Assist Georgia with avian influenza issues.
- Expressed opposition to large corporations receiving large subsidy amounts for avian flu indemnities.
- Harmonize sanitary and phytosanitary standards.
- Implement a long-term focus on traceability of the beef supply using the BSE situation as a starting point.
- Recognize bison in BSE surveillance programs.
- USDA must be able to assure that Canada's safeguards at least match ours, particularly with regard to BSE.
- Support the Aquatic Animal Health Program, locally known as the Infectious Salmon Anemia Control Program. Implement a salmon indemnity program.
- Help New Hampshire to get its Scrapie Program in line with Federal regulations.
- Curtail rabbit imports from countries that have Viral Hemorrhagic Disease. Rabbits from countries using serological disease management should also be prevented from entering the U.S. market.
- Assist Hawaiian cattlemen with Fireweed.
- Implement a control program for Axis Deer in Hawaii.
- Implement Federal inspection of produce and plants entering Hawaii.
- Establish a separate division within USDA for the sole purpose of processing the hundreds of pending petitions for removing sanitary and phytosanitary trade barriers in export markets.
- Increase incentives for adaptive management of native species, including funding for management of land under USDA rental agreements and easements to control invasive species and to mimic natural disturbances such as with prescribed burning.

- Construct an inspection facility and an adjoining cargo consolidation area in Honolulu to prevent establishment of invasive species that come through the Asia-Pacific pathway.
- Reemphasize the Federal responsibility of USDA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and give pests in natural areas the same kind of attention and priority as pests in agricultural areas.
- Build a USDA multi-species fruit fly facility in Hawaii to ensure a domestic supply of sterile fruit flies for California. A multi-species facility could also support the current ARS area-wide fruit fly suppression program that has proven to be very beneficial to Hawaii growers.
- Increase resources for USDA to address phytosanitary issues preventing the export of domestic potatoes.
- Support control of weeds and invasive species on thousands of acres in Hawaii using farm bill programs such as CREP and EQIP.
- Initiate and support a "National Wood Products Utilization and Marketing Strategy" to support and protect our domestic forest-based industries, and help manage and conserve our forest resources.
- Combat the Tomato Wilt Virus in Georgia that is becoming detrimental to both tobacco and peanut crops.
- Provide research grant opportunities in the 2007 farm bill to quickly address emerging pests.
- Implement the proposed National Clean Plant Network.
- Include assistance in the farm bill for quarantined landowners and producers, especially for combating fever tick infestation in Texas.
- Provide help for invasive species, particularly preventing Kogon Grass from entering Georgia.
- Create a noxious weed fund to help pay the cost of control. Offer incentives to promote crop rotation without losing base.
- Fund the Invasive Species Initiative.
- Provide \$30 million in the farm bill to California for the State department of agriculture to help prevent introduction of pests.
- Changing quarantine 37 regulations to allow the importation of potted phalaenopsis from Taiwan creates potential risks of importing fungi, bacteria, and insects that will be detrimental to U.S. agriculture.