

Attention Asian Herbal Medicine Importers: Whole Dodder Seeds Are Prohibited Entry Into the United States

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has recently updated its miscellaneous import manual to clarify that products, including foods, containing whole dodder seeds (*Cuscuta* spp.) are prohibited entry into the United States. APHIS regulates whole dodder seeds, both as a parasitic plant pest under Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 330 and as a Federal noxious weed under Title 7 CFR, Part 360.

This action is necessary because whole viable dodder seeds have recently been imported into the United States as pharmaceuticals and as food items, such as compressed dodder cakes. Officials with the California Department of Food and Agriculture are finding a growing number of dodder infestations on a wide range of host plants in several California counties. APHIS is concerned that nonnative dodder imported as herbal medicine may provide a pathway for this invasive weed parasite to become established in the United States.

Dodders are harmful parasitic weeds that steal nutrients from a wide variety of host plants, including a number of agricultural and horticultural crop species. Examples include alfalfa, asparagus, clover, flax, melon, potato, safflower, sugar beet, tomato, chrysanthemum, dahlia, and petunia. Dodders reduce crop yields, infest roadside foliage, affect nursery stock, and can kill host plants. Dodders also decrease a plant's ability to resist disease. They can spread plant diseases from one host to another as they grow and attach themselves to more than one plant.

Products containing dodder seed powder or crushed seeds are incapable of producing a new dodder plant. Therefore, these processed products do not pose a risk and are admissible into the United States.

Other prohibited Federal noxious weeds and parasitic plants sometimes found imported as herbal medicines include *Aeginetia indica*, *Alternanthera sessilis*, *Cassytha filiformis*, *Cistanche* spp., *Imperata cylindrica*, *Ipomoea aquatica*, *Loranthus* spp., *Monochoria vaginalis*, *Orobanche* spp., *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, *Siphonostegia chinensis*, *Solanum torvum*, *Solanum viarum*, *Striga asiatica*, and *Taxillus*. USDA prohibits the importation of any parts of these plants that are capable of producing a new plant. That includes whole seeds and other fresh vegetative parts of these plants.

For more information, please visit APHIS' Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance Web site at <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/trade>>.

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