

FOR INFORMATION
DA-2007-65
December 10, 2007

SUBJECT: Detections of Red Palm Mite (*Raoiella indica*) in Palm Beach County, Florida

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On December 7, 2007, APHIS confirmed detections of the red palm mite (RPM), *Raoiella indica*, in Palm Beach County, Florida. This is the first confirmed find of this pest in the continental United States. In November 2006, APHIS confirmed the presence of RPM in areas of Puerto Rico. RPM is a pest of international quarantine significance and a direct threat to the ornamental palm and coconut industries in Florida, Alabama, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Texas.

Since its first detection in Puerto Rico, APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program has informed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to heighten inspection vigilance of agricultural host plants during pre-departure passenger and cargo clearance of flights destined for the mainland United States. In addition, PPQ coordinated the formation of a technical working group (TWG) of subject matter experts to identify methods and strategies for RPM survey, detection, identification, and management; this TWG continues to assess new development and detections.

This outbreak of RPM in Florida is considered to be under surveillance. APHIS and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) are conducting ongoing delimiting surveys in the area of the detection site. Delimiting surveys are ongoing and, to date, no detections have occurred at nurseries that ship interstate.

RPM originates from Asia and Africa. It was first detected in the Western Hemisphere on the Caribbean Island of Martinique in 2003, and has since spread to other islands including Dominica, Trinidad, and Guadeloupe. Wind currents and transport of infested plants and leaves are the mode of dispersion for this mite.

For additional details on the Federal response to the detection of RPM, you may contact Brian Kopper, Eastern Regional Program Manager, at (919) 855-7318 or Valerie DeFeo, Staff Officer, at (301) 734- 4387.

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