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Department
of Agriculture
State of Hawaii

NEWS RELEASE

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Snake Caught at Hilo Nursery

A 22-inch gopher snake, *Pituophis m.catenifer*, was found at the Palms of Paradise Nursery in Hilo on the island of Hawaii. Last Friday morning, a nursery worker was able to catch the snake as it was crawling on gravel fronting the nursery's office. The worker promptly called the State Department of Agriculture and an inspector went to collect the animal. The snake was transported to Oahu and has been identified by the Honolulu Zoo's Animal Keeper Dwain Uyeda.

It is believed the snake hitched hiked its way to Hilo aboard a container filled with plastic nursery pots which was brought in from Rancho Santa Fe, California.

Gopher snakes are found in the western states, south of western Oregon through western and central California. This species is nonvenomous and can grow up to four feet long. Gopher snakes are noted for feeding on rodents, small mammals, birds and their eggs. They are usually active during the day, but may be active at night during hot weather. Females lay their eggs in the summer with clutches ranging from between 3-24 eggs. Eggs hatch within 2-3 months.

Snakes are illegal in Hawaii and anyone seeing a snake is asked to call the Department's PEST Hotline at 586-PEST (7378). Perpetrators caught harboring and raising snakes and other illegal animals are subject to stiff penalties with a minimum fine of \$5,000, and a maximum of \$200,000 and up to three years in jail. Individuals with illegal pets are encouraged to turn them into the Department under the State's Amnesty Program which grants immunity to those who voluntarily come forward. Again, anyone with information or knowledge about snakes and other illegal animals is asked to call the Department's PEST HOTLINE at 586-PEST (7378).

Photo opportunities of the gopher snake will be available until 4:30 this afternoon at the State's Plant Quarantine Station located at 701 Ilalo Street. Arrangements will be made to send the snake to an out-of-state reptile holding facility.

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