

Plant Protection and Quarantine Employees Uncover Pests in Imported Scented Pine Cones

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) employees, including safeguarding, intervention, and trade compliance officers, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) intercepted imported shipments of beetle-infested scented pine cones in nine states earlier this month, prompting a national recall of potpourri, seasonal decorations, and other crafts mixed with pine cones from India. Officers found live and dead *Chlorophorus strobilicola* Champion larvae, a pine cone-eating longhorned beetle, in packaged seasonal potpourri boxes destined for Target stores across the country.

The slender, banded beetle was first detected in North Carolina and later found in California, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and West Virginia. Upon further investigation, USDA expanded its recall to include two distributors of the pine cone products and seven other retailers—Walmart, K-mart, Frank's Nursery, JoAnn Fabrics, Lowe's, and Dollar Tree.

The recall applies to items based on UPC codes or SKU numbers. Similar items that do not bear a listed UPC code or SKU numbers are not affected by the recall.

APHIS officials are urging consumers to either return the contaminated products to the store where they were purchased, or dispose of the goods properly. Infested pine cones should be double bagged, tied securely, and disposed of in the trash.

The Plant Protection Act gives USDA the authority to detect, control, eradicate, suppress, prevent, or retard the spread of plant pests or noxious weeds for the protection of agriculture, the environment, and economy of the United States.

As an added precaution to safeguard American agriculture and the environment, APHIS is amending its import requirements to mandate fumigation of pine cones from India prior to entry into the United States.

The recall applies to items with specific UPC codes. Please visit the APHIS Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/sa_pinecones.html for the current list of applicable UPC codes.

Chlorophorus strobilicola (Cerambycidae)

Description and Life Cycle

Chlorophorus strobilicola is a 0.8–1.2 cm-long wood-boring pest not known to exist in the United States. It's a member of the large group of slender, colorful clytine longhorned beetles. This group is recognized by the long, narrow body, long legs, relatively short antennae, and bright stripes and patterns on the outer wings.

The insect's eggs are deposited one at a time in the crevices between the scales of mature, green pine cones approximately 15 to 20 on each cone. In about 2 weeks, the larvae hatch and bore directly into the cone where they feed on the internal woody tissue. The larvae feed in the cellular parts of the scales and central axes to avoid the more strongly lignified vascular tracts.

Pupation, or transformation, takes place in the pine cone's broad scale head most of the time, but the metamorphosis has been noted in the cone's central axis and other parts. After a 2-week pupation period, the adults emerge through oval holes in the scale head. The life cycle is normally 1 year with a pre-monsoon emergence period in April and the first half of May.

Spread

Originally from India, the pests' primary host is pine cones of *Pinus kesiya*. Store managers and consumers concerned about possible infestation should check for exit holes in the cone, sawdust-like material on the scales, or egg sacs in the crevices.

Damage

Chlorophorus strobilicola infests cones of pine trees growing at altitudes of 2,000 to 6,500 feet. Normally, the damage is negligible, except in a low seed year when the proportion of cones infested may rise to 40 percent.

During cold weather infested pine cones may fall to the ground. The scales of healthy, ripe cones separate after falling to the ground, but the scales of infested cones won't.

Additional Information

For more information, visit the APHIS Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/invasive>.

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