



The inland inspection program is one part of USDA's safeguarding system. This system protects American agriculture and natural resources from harmful pests and diseases.

### Safeguarding American Agriculture From Foreign Pests and Diseases

As the expanding global economy continues to open up new opportunities for trade, thousands of commodities enter the United States every day from around the world. These products, which often move across the country in rail containers or trucks, range from marble tiles to machine parts to crafts made with agricultural materials. Many people do not realize that any one of those shipments could contain pests or diseases capable of causing serious harm to American agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) takes careful measures to ensure that such imported goods are pest and disease free.

Due to a significant increase in the number of agricultural pests and diseases entering the United States by "hitchhiking" in cargo shipments, APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) unit began an inland inspection program in September 2000. As

*Cover photo:* When a PPQ inspector finds a suspicious pest, he or she prepares it for shipment to PPQ's insect identifiers.



PPQ officers inspect imported cargo for invasive pests and diseases that threaten American agriculture.

a supplement to port-of-entry inspections, PPQ officers inspect shipments of cargo they define as low risk when the cargo reaches its inland destination, instead of when the shipments enter the country at a seaport or land-border crossing.

Inland inspections take place at either the transportation terminal or consignees' premises. Currently, these thorough inspections are being done at Kansas City, MO, Chicago, and Dallas. PPQ is establishing additional inland inspection sites in Houston and New Orleans and plans to add more locations throughout the United States in the future.



Many shipments cleared at inland inspection sites are packed in wooden materials. These materials (wood chips, crating, pallets, and skids) can contain harmful pests like the Asian longhorned beetle. More than 200,000 rail containers like the two in this picture entered the United States every month in 1999.

APHIS hopes this publication will make it easier for importers, brokers, and shippers to understand the inland inspection program.

### Low-Risk Cargo: Still a Threat

PPQ deems cargo low risk when the commodity itself does not pose a significant threat to American agriculture. Although some products may be low risk, like most nonfood items (e.g., dried foodstuffs, valves, and heavy equipment), they are often shipped in material made from agricultural products, such as solid wood packing. This material itself can harbor pests. Also, some low-risk cargo may contain craft articles made with rice straw, bark, or other fiber products.

Although they pose less of a risk to American agriculture than plant importations, these shipments are still considered a



Harmful pests can also enter the United States on the vehicles transporting imported cargo. Here, a PPQ inspector checks the outside of a cargo container for snails or insects.

threat. For instance, in 1996, shipments arriving in New York from China contained in solid wood packing material (wooden crates) or supported on pallets brought the Asian longhorned beetle to the United States. Currently, PPQ is eradicating large infestations of this invasive pest, which has no known predators in the United States, in both New York City and Chicago. Thousands of trees in both locations have been cut down to stop the spread of this beetle. This ongoing eradication program has already cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

Another example of a harmful foreign pest entering the United States in cargo is the Asian gypsy moth. Infested cargo containers carrying egg masses of this insect arrived here in 1991. Although PPQ and State cooperators suppressed the Asian gypsy moth infestation, more than 500 species of trees and shrubs would be devastated if it were to become established here.



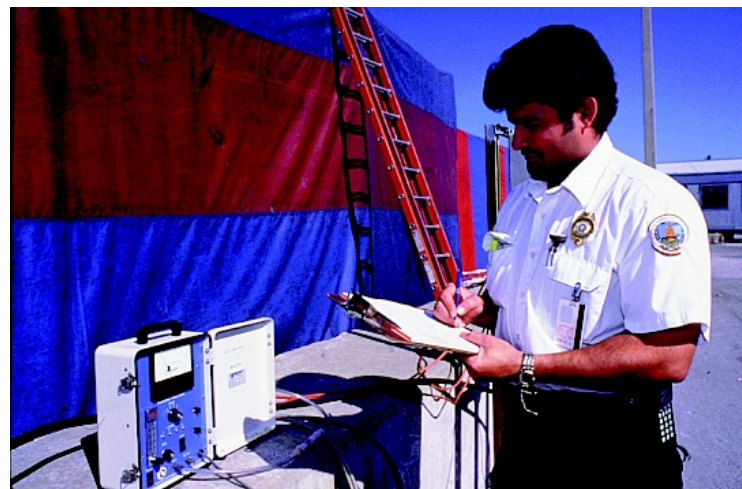
The Asian longhorned beetle and Asian gypsy moth are just two examples of invasive pests that have hitchhiked their way into the United States in shipments of low-risk cargo.

## The Automated Targeting System

The Automated Targeting System (ATS) is an automated data system linked to the U.S. Customs Service's Automated Commercial System (ACS). ATS contains the ACS import data, such as manifests, that PPQ uses to enforce regulations and facilitate the movement of imported products through the United States. ATS provides PPQ with up-to-date import information to make better decisions on inspections and whether or not specific commodities can enter this country.

To inspect a shipment at an inland inspection site, PPQ issues an "inbond hold" on that shipment when it first arrives at its port of entry, either a seaport or land border port. An inbond hold means the cargo can travel directly to its automated inland destination; however, it will be inspected at that site. When the commodity reaches its automated inland destination, a PPQ officer inspects the entire shipment before any products are allowed to continue moving throughout the United States. However, PPQ officials at the port of entry have the option to override the inbond hold and inspect the shipment right there.

In the first 2 months of the inland inspection program, PPQ inspected more than 300 rail containers and trucks carrying low-risk cargo. Inspectors checking this material found about 10 pests that threaten American agriculture, including some wood-boring insects and snails.



To fumigate an infested shipment, this PPQ employee applies a specific gas to the entire shipment to kill all pests inside.

When a harmful pest is found in cargo, the shipment is fumigated to kill the pests. If fumigation is not a viable option, the shipment is either reexported or reconditioned. Reconditioning involves removing any solid wood packing material, which is destroyed, and repackaging the cargo in products that cannot contain harmful agricultural pests or diseases. In some cases, the cargo may be destroyed under strict safeguards to prevent pest dissemination.

### Additional Information

Harmful agricultural pests and diseases affect every U.S. resident. PPQ's inland inspection program is another way APHIS works to protect American agriculture from foreign pests and diseases. If you have questions about the inland inspection program, please call PPQ's port operations staff at (301) 734-8295.

If you have questions about the legal importation of plant and animal products into the United States, contact the PPQ Import Permit Unit at (301) 734-8645 or check the APHIS Website at <[www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)>.

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## Inland Inspection Program

Safeguarding American Agriculture  
Against Invasive Species



Checking containers and packing material for foreign pests is just as important as inspecting the cargo itself.

