



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs  
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## **USDA FINALIZES REGULATIONS ON AGRICULTURAL SELECT AGENTS AND TOXINS**

WASHINGTON, March 18, 2005—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service today announced the publication of a final rule that, among other things, removes plum pox and Asian soybean rust from the list of select agents and toxins.

The list of select agents and toxins was developed by USDA in conjunction with regulations governing the possession, use and transfer of these agents and toxins, which have the potential to pose a severe threat to public health and safety, to animal or plant health, or to animal or plant products.

This final rule revises the format and content of USDA's regulations, which prescribe registration, biocontainment/biosafety, incident response and security measures for facilities handling these agents and toxins to protect against the use of such agents or toxins in domestic or international terrorism.

Asian soybean rust is a fungal disease which was naturally introduced into the southeastern United States in the fall of 2004. Because the disease spreads primarily by wind-borne spores, it will continue to spread naturally. Asian soybean rust has been removed from the list of select agents and toxins to facilitate timely research on effective means to manage the disease.

Plum pox *potyvirus* is a virus of stone fruit that causes yield losses to growers and reduces the marketability of fruit. Plum pox has been removed from the list of select agents and toxins because it does not spread easily by natural means and it would be difficult to spread intentionally.

These amended regulations are now substantially parallel to regulations promulgated by the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The removal of plum pox and soybean rust from the list of select agents was effective upon signature of the rule. The USDA and HHS final rules are scheduled to be published in the March 18 *Federal Register*. APHIS documents published in the *Federal Register* are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

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