

 **NEWS RELEASE**

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USDA TO BEGIN ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE ERADICATION EFFORT FOR MASSACHUSETTS INFESTATION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 6, 2009--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will execute the eradication of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) from Central Massachusetts as a result of the finding of no significant impact from the recently completed environmental assessment. Infested tree removals in the Massachusetts regulated area currently are scheduled to begin the week of Jan. 5, 2009, weather permitting.

The eradication program consists of establishing a quarantine zone around the infestation, cutting and chipping infested trees, possibly removing selected host trees that are in proximity to infested trees, grinding or treating stumps of ALB-infested trees with herbicide to stop resprouting and chemically treating exposed host trees with imidacloprid via trunk and/or soil injections within a 1/2 mile of an ALB find. These actions are necessary to eradicate the ALB from Massachusetts, as well as to prevent the spread of ALB to other states.

The environmental assessment, titled "Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program in Worcester and Middlesex counties, Massachusetts," evaluated impacts to the human environment if no actions are taken to stop the spread of ALB in Massachusetts and the impact of host tree removal and chemical treatment within the area.

The eradication effort is designed to limit the spread of the invasive ALB and facilitate its eradication within the infested area in Massachusetts. This is critical because the ALB is potentially one of the most destructive and costly invasive species to enter the United States.

The insect threatens urban and suburban shade trees and recreational and forest resources valued at hundreds of billions of dollars. The ALB also might impact such industries as maple syrup production, the forest products industries and tourism if allowed to spread.

An ALB infestation that appears to be 8 to 10 years old was discovered in Worcester County, Mass., in August 2008. The infested area is currently being delimited to determine the extent of the infestation. No ALB have been discovered in Middlesex County, which neighbors Worcester County, but that county is included in eradication planning because of its proximity to the find in Worcester and in case infestations of ALB are eventually detected there.

No host tree removals or chemical treatments to fight the infestation have taken place to date. Chemical treatments will first take place in spring 2009.

Copies of the document detailing the assessment can be obtained by writing Carole Johnson, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 150, Riverdale, MD 20737 or via the Web at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/alb.shtml.

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