

News from the

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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AG SECRETARY TOURS BEETLE INFESTATION AREA URGES COOPERATION AS TIME NEARS FOR REMOVING TREES

(TRENTON) – New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus today joined local leaders, USDA and state officials and the media on a tour of the first area of Carteret in which trees will be cut down to eradicate the Asian longhorned beetle.

Workers will begin cutting down infested trees on Monday, November 29. Today's tour and press briefing were meant to prepare the public for what to expect during this process. The group walked through the area at Blair Road and Roosevelt Avenue, the site of the majority of the initial cutting activity.

"You don't contain or control this invasive pest; you can only eradicate it," said Secretary Kuperus. "We want to continue the great cooperation we have received so far from local leaders and residents in this effort as we move into the tree-cutting phase."

To date, 410 trees have been identified as infested, meaning they have evidence of the beetle's eggs being laid in them or have exit holes indicating larvae have matured and the adult beetle has exited after burrowing through the tree's heartwood. The vast majority of those trees have been found in Carteret and Woodbridge, Middlesex County, with a few each in Rahway and Linden in Union County.

In addition to those trees, potential host trees near infested ones also must be removed to ensure the beetle does not return. In the first phase of cutting, roughly 1,000 trees are expected to be removed to halt the beetle's spread. Eventually, as many as 4,000 trees will have to come down. A reforestation program, replacing those trees with varieties the beetle will not infest, will follow.

Asian longhorned beetles, native to China and Korea, have caused serious tree losses in New York State and Chicago. Only once before were the beetles found attacking trees in New Jersey, in Jersey City in October 2002. More than 100 infested trees and 400 trees total at that site were removed to eradicate the beetle.

The beetle can wreak havoc on hardwood trees such as maples, horsechestnuts, birches and elms. The female bores into the bark to lay her eggs. Once hatched, the grub-like young burrow deeper into the tree until finally reaching the woody tissue. A year later, as adults, they burrow back out. Ultimately, as many beetles burrow through a tree, the tree is killed from the inside out. Trees can become so riddled with burrowed tunnels that they become unsafe, especially during high winds or storms.

Asian longhorned beetles are about 1 to 1.5 inches long and have a shiny, black exterior with white spots. Their name comes from their long antennae, which are banded black and white and are roughly the same length or longer than the insect's body.

Anyone suspecting the presence of this beetle should contact the NJDA at 1-866-BEETLE-1 or (609) 292-5440. For more information, visit the NJDA website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture or the USDA website at www.aphis.usda.gov.

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