

USDA Penalizes Rhode Island Companies for Moving Wood from the Massachusetts Asian Longhorned Beetle Quarantine Area

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has issued civil penalties of \$1,875 each against two Rhode Island companies for violating provisions of the Plant Protection Act for moving prohibited wood out of the Massachusetts Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) quarantine zone as designated by a federal domestic quarantine order. The companies have paid the penalties.

The civil penalties against Warwick Tree Service, Inc. of East Greenwich, R.I., and Yard Works Inc. of Warwick, R.I., come after 11 ash logs were moved from Green Hill Park in Worcester, Mass., to a destination in North Kingston, R.I., on or about Nov. 13, 2008. Civil penalties the companies faced for moving prohibited articles ranged between \$1,000 for an individual anticipating no monetary gain to \$1,000,000 for multiple willful violations of the Plant Protection Act settled at one time.

A regulatory program, with federal and state rules stopping the intrastate and interstate movement of wood, woody debris, logs, lumber and nursery stock, was formally put in place in Massachusetts on Sept. 4, 2008. Ash trees can sustain the ALB, an invasive pest that infests and kills several species of hardwood trees.

A joint Massachusetts state and APHIS investigation, prompted by reports of the illegal wood movement, determined that Warwick Tree Service, Inc. was subcontracted by Yard Works, Inc. to assist in a tree removal effort under a compliance agreement held by Yard Works, Inc. Holding a compliance agreement with the ALB program allows access to a designated wood disposal/destruction site within the quarantine zone where wood is chipped to render it safe from spreading the infestation. All wood material cut in the 64-square mile Massachusetts ALB quarantine area is brought to this site by companies holding compliance agreements.

The investigation revealed that Warwick Tree Service, Inc. transported the potentially infested logs out of the regulated area and into North Kingston, R.I., jeopardizing plant health in two states and potentially spreading the beetle infestation. The wood was retrieved from Rhode Island on Nov. 18, 2008, and brought back to the Massachusetts wood disposal site where it was chipped. A survey of ALB host trees in the North Kingston, R.I. area where the ash logs were taken revealed no signs of ALB infestation.

In addition to the fines, the compliance agreement between Yard Works, Inc. and the ALB program is revoked and Warwick Tree Service, Inc. is ineligible to obtain one.

Through the Massachusetts ALB program, APHIS works cooperatively with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the City of Worcester, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service and the towns of Holden, Boylston, West Boylston and Shrewsbury to eradicate ALB from Massachusetts and to keep ALB from spreading throughout New England. The ALB was detected in Massachusetts in August 2008.

ALB infests hardwood trees such as all species of maple, birch, horsechestnut, poplar, willow, elm and ash. Upon hatching from eggs laid just under the bark, ALB larvae bore into healthy hardwood trees and feed on living tree tissue and heartwood over the winter. Throughout the summer, adult beetles emerge from exit holes and briefly feed on the leaves and small twigs of host trees.

The adult ALB is a large, distinctive-looking insect measuring 1 to 1-1/2 inches long, not including its antennae. These antennae, which give the insect its common name, are as long as the body itself in females and almost twice the body length in males. The insect's body is shiny black with white spots; the antennae are banded in black and white.

Signs of ALB infestation include: adult beetles themselves during the summer and until frost; the perfectly round exit holes (about 3/8 to 1/2 inch in diameter) made by adult beetles when they emerge from trees; the pockmarks on tree trunks and branches where female beetles deposited eggs; frass (wood shavings and saw dust) produced by larvae feeding and tunneling; early fall coloration of leaves or dead branches and running sap produced by the tree at the egg laying sites, or in response to larval tunneling.

For questions about the beetle, or to obtain a compliance agreement to perform tree-related work in the Massachusetts quarantine zone, please contact the Massachusetts ALB program at 1-866-702-9938.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS home page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and click on the "Newsroom" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Suzanne Bond at (301) 734-5175 or e-mail: Suzanne.m.bond@aphis.usda.gov.

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