

Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Program Update for Massachusetts August 13, 2008

On August 1, a private citizen reported an Asian longhorned beetle find in Worcester, Massachusetts. On August 5, the specimen was confirmed as Asian longhorned beetle by the Systematic Entomological Laboratory. Several heavily infested trees have been found in the area. On August 6, representatives from USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and Forest Service, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and the City of Worcester met to determine the initial response to the infestation. On August 6, a press conference was held at City Hall in Worcester to inform the public about the Asian longhorned beetle infestation. A call service center is in place by the City of Worcester, and internet reporting is being handled by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources.

On August 8, the State of Massachusetts established the regulated boundary encompassing the area of the known infestation. 16.72 square miles are currently regulated within the City of Worcester. A Federal Order is currently being processed to establish the federal regulations for this area, which are listed in 7 CFR 301.51. The regulated area will be expanded as needed based on additional detections. On August 11, two officers from APHIS Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance arrived to investigate the source of the infestation. Scientists from the APHIS Center for Plant Health Science and Technology will be assisting in aging the infestation.

Local state, federal, and city inspectors are currently conducting initial surveys of the area to help identify the core and outside boundaries of the infestation. An Incident Command System is being coordinated with Federal, State, and local incident commanders on site August 18 to develop a plan of action and begin delimitation surveys. To facilitate the multi-agency coordination in managing the initial response to the infestation, the City of Worcester is providing temporary office space and telephone service.

On August 13, Federal, State, and City of Worcester officials held a meeting with officials from the surrounding municipalities of Holden, Boylston, West Boylston, and Shrewsbury to inform them of the Asian longhorned beetle infestation and the potential impact on their communities. Surveys conducted this week identified additional infested trees to the north and east of the detections identified last week in Worcester. As a result of these finds, the regulated area will expand into the four municipalities. The City of Worcester hosted a press conference following the meeting in order to inform the public of the additional detections and the future expansion of the regulated area. Officials from USDA APHIS PPQ, USFS, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources participated in both events.

Removal of infested trees will not occur until late fall when delimiting surveys are completed and most adult beetles have died. By waiting until the fall, we are attempting to keep the infestation contained; if left alone most beetles will not stray far from the tree from which they emerged.

Besides removing infested trees, additional control activities will be carried out within a minimum distance of a ½ mile from each infested tree. Based on surveys and levels of infestation, program managers will determine whether additional exposed host trees need to be removed to eliminate light infestations overlooked during the initial visual survey. In addition, the program will apply preventative chemical treatments to noninfested host trees in the spring for three consecutive years. These treatments deliver imidacloprid, a common insecticide used in over the counter lawn and garden products, using either soil or trunk injection. The insecticide disperses through the tree's vascular system to the smallest branches and twigs by the time adult beetles emerge in summer. ALB adults feed on the small twigs and leaves, ingest the chemical, and die before they can mate. Young larvae tunneling under the bark may also ingest the insecticide and die. Treatments are not used for trees that are already infested. A combination of the two control methods may be used.

Once the delimiting survey is completed, additional surveys will be conducted to confirm eradication of ALB from Worcester and the surrounding area.

The science-based response to the Asian longhorned beetle is outlined in the ALB Emergency Response Guidelines, which can be viewed at:

www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/asian_lhb/downloads/rguidelines1-07.pdf

The ALB 2005 Strategic Plan can be obtained at

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/asian_lhb/downloads/strategic.pdf