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Column: Featured Pest

Preventing new pests from entering our islands protects our environment, economy, and health, and it is a building block to a sustainable Hawai'i. Some prevention initiatives are featured in this pest roundup.

New Pest Poster Available

The landscape industry provides our state with more than 11,000 on-the-ground eyes and ears that can help protect Hawai'i from new pests. To help identify some of the most unwanted landscape and nursery pests in the United States, the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) has produced a new poster. The poster contains photos and descriptions of sixteen insect pests, their host plants, and known distribution. Some of the featured pests include palm-killers like the red palm weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*) and coconut rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros*), and the lobate lac scale (*Paratachardina pseudolobata*), which officials in Florida consider one of the most devastating pests of trees and shrubs ever introduced. New detections of these or other pests should be reported to the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture Pest Hotline at 643-PEST (643-7378). For a free copy of the poster, please contact your nearest CTAHR Extension office or email Dr. Arnold Hara at Arnold@hawaii.edu.

Legislators Support Better Biosecurity

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) continued to work towards implementing their new Biosecurity program, including building joint federal-state inspection facilities at each port. It is clear what a difference properly planned and staffed inspection facilities can make. Between July 1 and December 31, 2010 there were just **87 pest interceptions at Honolulu International Airport**. During that same time period at the new **Kahului Airport inspection facility, inspectors made 639 pest interceptions**, despite receiving less than 5% of the goods that Honolulu receives (federal funding supports some inspectors at Kahului, thus inspection capacity has been less impacted by state cutbacks).

Legislators again showed their support of the Biosecurity program with the passage of two key bills for inspection facilities and inspection staff. One bill awaiting the Governor's signature at press time is HB 1568 CD1, which clarifies the need for building and operating inspection facilities at each port for imported AND exported commodities, and identifies the

Hawai'i Department of Transportation's responsibilities in assisting HDOA. A second bill, HB 865 SD2 was signed into law as Act 36, increasing the fee assessed for the inspection, quarantine, and eradication of invasive species contained in any freight from 50 cents to 75 cents for every 1,000 pounds of freight or part thereof brought into the State. Without this bill, more inspectors would have lost their jobs in May 2012. Instead, HDOA can begin rebuilding the program by hiring additional inspectors.

Saving the 'Ōhi'a

HDOA has announced its intention to go through the formal rulemaking process to restrict the importation of Myrtaceae (myrtle) family plants, which are known to carry 'ōhi'a rust (*Puccinia psidii*). One strain of 'ōhi'a rust entered Hawai'i and killed virtually all of the rose apple trees statewide, and this rust was intercepted several times on cut flowers in the myrtle family. Research confirms that there are multiple strains of this rust, and the fear is that new introductions of the rust could prove devastating to 'ōhi'a trees. HDOA will be working with CTAHR and nurseries to provide local-grown alternatives to high-risk imports. Work is also underway to look at a diagnostic tool that may be used to screen commodities like imported eucalyptus seeds for the forest industry. Your help is important! Please refrain from importing myrtle family plants, consider providing local-grown alternatives, and participate in the public meetings that will be held in each county later this year.

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Christy Martin is the Public Information Officer for the statewide Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS), a public-private partnership working to protect Hawai'i from invasive species.