



## COMMENTARY

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What is the prevention of new invasive species in Hawai‘i worth to you? Although the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) is responsible for keeping new invasive species out of Hawai‘i, they do not have the infrastructure or funding necessary for the job. HDOA is working to fix these issues by implementing a new Biosecurity Program based on risk assessments on incoming goods and innovative inspection systems from around the world.

One stumbling block is that funding for inspection services comes from State General Funds (taxpayer dollars), and has not risen with the increase in incoming cargo. Moloka‘i residents are directly affected by this shortfall in the lack of an HDOA inspector based on Moloka‘i.

Last year, HDOA succeeded in gaining the ability to collect \$1. per 20ft. sea cargo container, an important first step. This year Legislature passed HB 2843 to include all incoming air and sea cargo at a rate of 50 cents per 1,000 lbs for inspection services at ports of entry. Unfortunately, Governor Lingle has announced her intention to veto this bill, without plans to fix this ongoing inspection shortfall.

House Bill 2843 is also important for securing matching federal funds for a related Biosecurity bill, SB 2850, which allows HDOA to build joint federal-state inspection facilities at key ports of entry. A prototype joint inspection facility opened at Kahului Airport in February 2008, and a press release from Governor Lingle’s office cited that there were five times more pests found the very next month, proving that inspections conducted in proper facilities result in more invasive species are found—before they become widespread pests.

Passage of HB 2843 is also crucial due to the military buildup on Guam. As the Marines move from Okinawa to Guam, cargo movement is expected to rise by 600%. Much of that will be to or through Hawai‘i, increasing the risk of brown treesnakes arriving. HDOA needs an enclosed inspection facility and an adequate number of inspectors and dog teams to search incoming cargo and crafts for snakes. HB 2843 must pass this year if we hope to be ready.

Opponents cite undue costs to residents as their main concern. Hawai‘i imported 7,300,000 tons of cargo in 2006 (HDOT). At a cost of 50 cents per 1,000 lbs, HB 2843 would generate about \$7,000,000 per year for HDOA’s Biosecurity Program, and the cost to each Hawai‘i resident would be about \$5 per year—this is less than the cost of going to a movie.

Hawai‘i has already received the coqui frog, nettle caterpillar, wiliwili gall wasp, ‘ōhia rust, varroa bee mite, and other pests that erode our environment and ability to produce our own food. Despite our ailing economy, pests will continue to arrive, and the costs of dealing with these must be considered in planning for a sustainable future. If you are one of the nearly 75% of residents that support invasive species prevention in Hawai‘i, call or write to Gov. Lingle to ask for her support of HB 2843.

HB 2843 may be viewed here

[http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/HB2843\\_CD1\\_.htm](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/HB2843_CD1_.htm)

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