



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Christy Martin, CGAPS PIO, Cell: (808) 722-0995

Unapproved Coqui Control Measures Cause for Concern

Recent media reports promoting the use of common substances such as baking soda for controlling coqui frogs are cause for concern, as they have not yet gone through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rigorous testing and approval procedures. The EPA process takes several years, but it is absolutely necessary to ensure that all pest control substances meet maximum public and environmental safety standards, while still being effective on the pest.

Research is ongoing to identify substances and methods for coqui frog control, and the current focus is on dry substances so that applicators do not have to carry water to treatment sites.

Sodium bicarbonate (commonly known as baking soda) was identified as a promising substance for frog control by Mark Munekata of the Big Island. Although sodium bicarbonate is a common ingredient in our food, it has not yet been tested or proven to be safe to other animals, insects and plants at the levels that would need to be used to control coqui frogs. The study requirements for any substance proposed for pest control are mandated by the EPA.

Sodium bicarbonate and potassium bicarbonate, a similar substance used in fungicides and dry fire extinguishers, are now being tested by the USDA National Wildlife Research Center's Field Station in Hilo. Tests will include coqui control efficacy and the effects on non-target species. These results and previously conducted research information on how these substances break down in nature will be sent to the EPA. Until a substance has gone through this testing and is approved by the EPA, it is illegal to use as a frog control technique.

The United States is home to more than 100 species of frogs. In their native habitats, frogs are a part of the natural ecosystem. Hawai'i has no native frogs or toads. The coqui are a celebrated native species of Puerto Rico, but are considered a non-native pest in Hawai'i.

Coqui control research is funded by the County of Hawaii and the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and the USDA National Wildlife Research Center's Field Station in Hilo.

Approved Control Techniques

- Citric acid mixed with water to sixteen percent (16%) solution is approved for use by the general public, and is very effective in controlling coqui and their eggs. (Mix 2-1/2 cups citric acid per gallon of water).
- Consider altering landscaping around residences to reduce frog habitat. Frog habitat includes shrubs, trees, rock walls with crevices, open pipes, or other similar protected environments.
- Hot water in excess of 113 degrees for 10 minutes will also control frogs. Hot water treatment chambers may be used to treat plants prior to shipment from the Big Island. Homeowners can treat newly purchased plants in a similar way by placing them in a hot shower.

- For certified pesticide applicators, the restricted-use pesticide endosulfan, which is labeled for many nursery and agricultural crops will control frogs at rates for insect control. All applicable label directions must be followed.
- Please note that the permit to use hydrated lime expired in April. It is no longer an approved method of coqui control, although a permit renewal has been requested. A decision on this request is expected in about 30-60 days.

For more information on coqui frogs and frog control methods, visit <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/coqui/index.asp>



Coqui frog photo provided with permission to use by DLNR

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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 Hawaii from invasive species.