



U.S. Customs and Border Protection

News Release

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Keeping the Evergreen State Ever Green

SEATTLE– Each and every day, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agriculture specialists are on the front lines of the fight to keep the Evergreen State ever green. The threat posed to Washington's lush forests by invasive wood-boring insects is real, as shown by a 2001 Citrus Longhorned Beetle infestation in Tukwila, Washington. This infestation was successfully eliminated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), but even with their quick response, thousands of trees had to be cut down to prevent further infestation by this tree pest.

A major pathway for wood-boring pests to enter the United States is inside imported wood packing material, nestled so deep in the lumber of the crating and pallets that most people would not notice the signs. Wood packing material is commonly used to protect cargo during transport and allows for quick loading and unloading. Highly trained CBP agriculture specialists know what to look for and are working at ports of entry throughout the nation to inspect wood packing material for tell-tale signs such as bore holes created by the bug's larva or wood dust known as "frass" that these boring insects leave behind.

In 2005, USDA implemented regulations mandating the treatment and marking of all wood packing material imported into the U.S. These regulations require wood packing material to be heat treated or fumigated to kill any harmful wood-boring insects (e.g. longhorned beetles) that may be present in the wood. Despite these requirements, some wood packing material is not treated in accordance with the regulations and is found to be infested with live wood-boring pests.

During 2011, CBP agriculture specialists at the ports of Seattle, Tacoma, and Blaine intercepted 77 shipments with wood packing material infested by live wood-boring insects. These insect invaders were found in packing material of cargo arriving in the U.S. via air, land, and sea. Most of the wood packing material had markings indicating treatment in accordance with the USDA regulations; however, the presence of these live pests indicates the prescribed treatment was not conducted or was conducted improperly. Most shipments found to have infested wood packing material result in the cargo and the wood packing material being re-exported at the owner's expense. Importers may also incur hefty fines for repeat violations.

In an effort to reduce the frequency of these pests, CBP, USDA, and WSDA have conducted outreach to companies whose shipments were found to have infested wood packing material. Michele James, the Director of Field Operations for CBP's Seattle Field Office, believes that working with the trade community is a key element of keeping out these wood-boring insects. She said that "CBP is partnering with the trade industry to reduce the threat of invasive species, and through these efforts, we hope to help maintain the scenic beauty of the Northwest."

For more information on the 2001 Citrus Longhorned Beetle infestation in Tukwila, please visit www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/success_stories/beetles.shtml.

For more information on wood-boring insects and other invasive species, please visit www.hungrypests.com.

For more information on CBP's agriculture mission and wood packing enforcement, please visit www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/trade/trade_programs/agriculture/ or www.cbp.gov.

#CBP#

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of U.S. borders at and between official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.