



STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE  
1220 N Street, Room A-372  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## PEST EXCLUSION ADVISORY

NO. 30-2005

DATE: December 1, 2005  
TO: All County Agricultural Commissioners  
FROM: Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services

SUBJECT: Invasive Japanese Dodder – Seed Viability Testing and Eradication of Infestations

Recently, a highly invasive parasitic plant, *Cuscuta japonica* (Japanese dodder) was identified and eradicated from residential landscaping in Shasta and Yuba Counties (see below). Japanese dodder is a fast growing native of Asia. It is a federal and state noxious weed. Local infestations may have originated from non-devitalized seed sold as an herbal remedy. Dodder seed imported for medicinal uses must be accompanied by a declaration of devitalization. However, this is problematic. Shasta County inspectors were able to germinate 100% of “devitalized” seed confiscated from an herbal store. Seed from this source also resulted in one of the residential infestations in Shasta County.

To assess the extent of this problem, USDA, Safeguarding Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) is initiating a statewide market survey of dodder seed. You may be contacted by SITC to help identify seed sources and collect samples. Samples of 50 – 100 seeds from each location should be submitted to the CDFA Plant Pest Diagnostics Seed Lab for analysis. Under “remarks” on the PDR, please write “check for viability”. If you are interested in participating in the survey, contact the following individuals:

Stacy Tyralla (650) 821-8683 – Northern SITC Area  
Diana Hoffman (323) 726-4610 – Central SITC Area  
Rey Mosqueda (619) 661-4507 – Southern SITC Area

If you suspect you have a Japanese dodder infestation in your county, please notify Carla Markmann at (916) 654-0312 or by email at [cmarkmann@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:cmarkmann@cdfa.ca.gov).

Japanese dodder has a broad host range including commercial crops such as stone fruits, citrus, eggplant, and potatoes, as well as wild and ornamental herbaceous and woody plants. Heavy infestations may weaken and eventually kill the host. This species has caused severe nuisance infestations in Florida, South Carolina, and Texas. Dodder is capable of transmitting serious diseases such as citrus greening and several phytoplasma organisms.

Dodder is an annual vine with long, yellow-green stems. It can grow up to six inches per day. Small, cream-colored flowers, required for species identification, are produced from August to October. Seeds (see below) can germinate on the body of a host plant as well as in the soil. Tissue embedded in the host may over winter, giving rise to new infestations the following spring. For more information about dodder, go to: <http://www.forestpests.org/subject.html?SUB=5446>.

If you have questions about this advisory, contact Carla Markmann at (916) 654-0312 or by email at [cmarkmann@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:cmarkmann@cdfa.ca.gov).



Dodder on pear tree - Shasta County



Dodder in gardens - Yuba County



Japanese dodder seed