



DATE: September 18, 2012

TO: All County Agricultural Commissioners

FROM: Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services

SUBJECT: **PEST EXCLUSION ADVISORY NO. 33-2012**
Policy for Thrips Intercepted on Asparagus from Mexico at Border Protection Stations

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is issuing this advisory to communicate a new policy, developed in cooperation with industry and the County Agricultural Commissioners (CAC), for thrips intercepted on asparagus from Mexico at the California Border Protection Stations.

Please note that this policy applies only to commercial shipments of asparagus from Mexico infested with thrips.

Over the past five years more than 500 thrip specimens have been collected from shipments of asparagus from Mexico and submitted to the CDFA Plant Pest Diagnostics Center for identification. In nearly all instances, the thrips were identified as “C” rated and the shipments released.

In an effort to expedite identification of pests intercepted at the border, California Border Protection Stations utilize digital imaging which in most cases allows a digital microscope image to be sent to a qualified diagnostician for identification. However, thrips typically cannot be identified via digital imaging and must be submitted for lab analysis. This often results in lengthy shipping delays.

The procedures below will be followed by Border Protection Station staff when thrips are intercepted on commercial shipments of asparagus from Mexico. The procedures were developed to reduce delays to shipments of Mexican asparagus at our border while maintaining safeguards to ensure minimal risk of introducing pests of concern.

- Per normal protocols, all suspect pests will be photographed and submitted for preliminary identification using the digital imaging system.
- If, from the digital images, the diagnostician determines the specimen to be a thrips that cannot be identified to genus and species level, and confirms a provisional rating of “Q” pending further lab analysis:
 - The shipment may be allowed to proceed to destination under Warning Notice—if there is more than one drop, separate Warning Notices will be issued to each drop location.



- The following statements will be included in the Comments Section of the Warning Notice:

“Shipment infested with live thrips. Lab identification is pending (PDR No. XXXXXX). This shipment must be held at destination and may not be distributed until released by the County Agricultural Commissioner.”
- A thorough explanation will be given to the driver that the Warning Notice must be passed on to the receiver who is required to contact the CAC for release before distributing the shipment.
- After the truck has left the station, the Warning Notice will immediately be faxed to the receiving county/counties and the CDFA Sacramento Area Border Protection Station Manager.
- The specimen will be sent to the lab via “RUSH” with a note that the shipment is being held at destination pending identification. The Warning Notice number will be cited in the Comments Section of the PDR.
- Border Protection Station personnel will closely track the PDR each day until the lab results are entered. Once the results are received, the PDR will be sent to CDFA Sacramento Area Border Protection Station Manager.
- If for some reason the driver does not wish to continue under Warning Notice, the usual options of return out of state, treatment, or waiting at station for pest identification should be offered.

For questions regarding this advisory, please contact Saleem Khan at (916) 654-0312 or by e-mail at Saleem.Khan@cdfa.ca.gov.