



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Plant Protection
and Quarantine

Eastern Region

Asian Longhorned
Beetle Program
920 Main Campus
Drive, Suite 200,
Raleigh NC 27606

Phone: (919) 855-7328
Fax: (919) 855-7378

Cynthia Mills
CAE, CMC; President and CEO
TCIA Tree Care Industry Association
136 Harvey Road
Suite 101
Londonderry, NH 03053

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Homeowners Notice Clarification on Treatment Efforts for Asian Longhorned Beetle

The discovery of the invasive and destructive Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) in central Massachusetts has prompted the creation of a 64-square mile regulated area in Worcester County where activities are taking place to eradicate the invasive beetle. The regulated area currently incorporates the entire City of Worcester, as well as parts of Holden, Boylston, West Boylston and Shrewsbury. This notice is to provide updated information about one facet of the Massachusetts Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program (ALB Program) to take place within this regulated area—chemical treatments for those tree species able to host ALB populations (ALB host trees).

The ALB Eradication Program's strategic plan elements work together to stop the ALB from spreading through human activities and to eliminate reproducing beetle populations that exist. Eradication protocols include surveys to determine the location and scope of infestations and regulatory measures to control the movement of wood and woody debris in an ALB regulated area. These measures were put into effect in Worcester County in the days and weeks following the August 1, 2008 beetle detection. Another eradication protocol is cutting and chipping infested and high-risk host trees, an effort which began on January 5, 2009. Planting trees in communities to mitigate the impact of removals and educating the public about the insect are also important program activities. Another critical ALB Program element is the chemical treatments provided to ALB host trees to reduce beetle populations.

Through the ALB Program's eradication effort, contractors secured by ALB Program officials apply a systemic insecticide to designated ALB host trees within the regulated area at no charge to property owners. Treatment by ALB Program contractors takes place during spring months and is directed to ALB host trees that are within a one-half mile radius of infested tree locations. ALB Program contracted treatment takes place annually for a minimum of three consecutive years.

There has been interest expressed in private treatment by homeowners residing inside or outside of the ALB regulated area. It was previously stated that "There are no over-the-counter treatments formulated to successfully address the ALB." This statement is inaccurate. Homeowners interested in pursuing chemical applications independently



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may do so if they desire. There are chemical treatments for ALB available from commercial applicators, as well as pesticides for use by homeowners. However, homeowners that elect to treat ALB host trees independently will not be reimbursed by the ALB Program for the cost of such applications.

The ALB Program will not be treating trees in 2009. The main factor in reaching this decision was that the program is still determining the extent of the infestation. Resources will be devoted to delimiting the infestation this year so that infested trees can be identified and removed, thereby further reducing beetle populations. By focusing on survey efforts and removing infested and high risk trees, the program can better identify where treatment activities should be focused next year. Over 13,000 infested trees have been detected to date. The ALB program is removing infested trees as well as exposed high risk host trees on private property with owner consent. Over 21,000 total host trees have been removed so far.

The ALB is an invasive insect, native to Asia. It was first discovered in the United States in Brooklyn New York in 1996. The adult ALB is a large, distinctive-looking insect measuring 1 to 1 1/2 inches long, not including its antennae. These antennae, which give the insect its common name, are as long as the body itself in females and almost twice the body length in males. The insect's body is shiny black with white spots; the antennae are banded in black and white.

Signs of ALB infestation include: adult beetles themselves during the summer and until frost; the perfectly round exit holes (about 3/8 to 1/2 inch in diameter) made by adult beetles when they emerge from trees; the pockmarks on tree trunks and branches where female beetles deposited eggs; frass (wood shavings and waste) produced by larvae feeding and tunneling; early fall coloration of leaves, dead branches and running sap produced by the tree at the egg laying sites, or in response to larval tunneling.

Sincerely,



Christine K. Markham
National Program Director
USDA APHIS PPQ
ALB Eradication Program

Cc:

David G. Marren, Vice President, Safety and Regulatory Affairs, The F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company
Josh Ulman, Ulman Public Policy & Federal Relations