

Letter from APHIS PPQ Deputy Administrator Rebecca Bech regarding Thousand Canker Disease (dated 03/02/2011)

Dear Stakeholders:

Over the past few years, an important disease of walnut called thousand cankers disease (TCD) has been detected in eight western States and several counties in Tennessee. These infestations are thought to have been present for some 10 to 20 years. Concerned parties approached the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) to raise our awareness of TCD and asked us to establish a Federal quarantine to protect walnut tree resources from TCD in the United States. APHIS shares these concerns regarding the threat that TCD poses to the Nation's walnut resources.

Currently, APHIS has regulations in place that address some of the known TCD pathways, including requirements for the importation of solid wood packaging and propagative material. APHIS also has other ongoing efforts to mitigate forest pest threats from the interstate movement of firewood, which is another pathway for the spread of TCD.

To determine whether a Federal regulatory framework for TCD would be effective, APHIS reviewed the geographic distribution of the known TCD-affected areas, considered its potential to become established throughout the United States, and assessed the effectiveness of available regulatory tools. We concluded that such a regulatory framework would have little long-term impact on TCD spread. This is due to the challenges of regulating the long-distance movement of an array of products and shippers, poor detection capability, and the apparent broad geographic distribution of TCD in the United States.

APHIS plans to support State TCD programs by making investments towards developing improved survey, detection, and mitigation methods (e.g., traps and lures, treatments, etc.). In fiscal year 2010, APHIS provided, through Farm Bill funding, about \$160,000 for trap and lure development and \$6,250 for TCD surveys. APHIS continues to work closely with the U.S. Forest Service to coordinate survey, detection, and reporting guidance for our respective State counterparts. We hope to provide support for methods development and assistance to States for survey this fiscal year.

APHIS recognizes the importance of America's forests and will continue to identify ways to enhance their protection. Our partnership with States, Federal agencies, tribes, and affected stakeholders will enhance our understanding of TCD, and we hope that our efforts will result in limiting losses to America's walnut resources due to TCD.

Sincerely,

/s/ Rebecca A. Bech

Rebecca A. Bech
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine