

Walnut Twig Beetle Discovered in Nebraska: Q & A with Nebraska officials

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) announced recently that walnut twig beetle, a carrier of thousand cankers disease, was discovered in Gering. This is the first confirmation of the beetle in Nebraska. [Read the news release here.](#)

Walnut Council recently reached out to Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) and NDA to learn more about this beetle find and its potential impact on our members. No dead or symptomatic trees have been found to date and thousand cankers disease has NOT been found at this time, although surveys are continuing.

Here are the answers they provided to my questions:

Q: How many walnut twig beetles did you find? Was it a few or thousands?

A: Nebraska Department of Agriculture conducted a 6 week survey in both spring and fall of 2019. The spring survey was conducted from mid-May till end of July and the fall survey was conducted from early September till mid-October. Survey sites included 3 Lindgren funnel traps that were serviced every 2 weeks. No beetles were collected during the spring survey. During each 2 week check during the fall survey, 3-15 beetles were collected from each trap at a single site in Gering.

Q: Are there high risk areas around the traps the WTB was found – a log yard, large urban woodpile, campground? Most if not all of the finds in the east have been in those situations.

A: For the most part, there are not a lot of trees in general around Gering nor large stands of walnut trees. The trees in question were generally isolated and were near a maintenance shed for the city golf course. Hackberry and pine trees were the only trees close to the location. These trees at the site were stressed, mostly from being grown near buildings and in a rock parking lot.

*Q: Your website says you will be looking for the fungus *Geosmithia morbida* this year – did you look for it at all last year and not find it, or didn't look yet?*

A: We did not test for *G. morbida* in 2019. We plan to set baited branches in conjunction with our Lindgren funnel traps at the positive site during our 6 week fall survey. Travel restrictions stemming from directed health measures from COVID-19 may limit our ability to conduct baited branch surveys during our 6 week spring survey. The baited branch survey will be based on the protocol developed by Dr. Seybold and his team (attached). Baited branches will be sent to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln diagnostic lab for *G. morbida* testing. In addition to surveying the positive site, NDA moved more of our 51 traps further west to delimit the positive location. In 2019, no beetles were collected at a site about 5 miles north of the positive location.

The positive location is near Scotts Bluff National Monument. There is not an active camping site at the monument but there are campgrounds in Gering/Scottsbluff area (~2miles). This monument attracts visitors from all over the country so there is potential of infested wood being brought along.

Q: Have you had especially bad droughts in the past couple of years? Again, in the east the flare up of WTB was with drought conditions and with the past two+ years of plenty of rain the WTB numbers have gone to zero in many places.

A: The panhandle of Nebraska is typically dry, with Gering averaging about 15 in. of annual rainfall. This average is low compared to the US average of 38 inches so drought stress would not be unexpected most years.

Questions provided by Liz Jackson, executive director of Walnut Council. Answers provided by David H. Nielsen, State Survey Coordinator, Animal & Plant Health Protection, Nebraska Department of Agriculture on June 5, 2020.