USDA treating N.J. trees for ALB

5.01.06

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will treat 27,589 trees susceptible to the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) in New Jersey this spring, including approximately 4,800 trees to be added to the ALB quarantine as a result of an infested tree recently discovered in Linden, N.J. These treatments are part of the ALB cooperative eradication program's effort to prevent further infestation of this invasive insect pest and reduce beetle populations.

APHIS will treat trees in portions of the established 20-square mile quarantine area in New Jersey with the insecticide imidacloprid, which has yielded positive results in past treatments. Program officials will treat 12,279 trees in Linden, 6,557 trees in Woodbridge, 4,647 trees in Carteret, 3,585 trees in Rahway and 521 trees in Roselle. The 4,800 additional trees to be treated this year are in Linden and Roselle. Tree treatments began April 17 and will last until the middle of June.

Program officials, through the use of certified pesticide applicator contractors, will be injecting imidacloprid into the trees through capsules placed at the base of the trunk or by treating the soil surrounding trees through the use of a hand held injector applicator that uses compressed air. Each site will be closely monitored.

Regardless of the treatment form, the insecticide is dispersed through the tree's vascular system. This enables the insecticide to reach ALB adults feeding on small twigs and leaves and the larvae feeding beneath the bark of host trees. Imidacloprid is currently used in the lawn care industry to kill lawn grubs and in domestic pet treatments to kill fleas.

The larvae of the ALB bore into healthy hardwood trees and feed on living tree tissue and heartwood. Later, throughout the summer, adult beetles emerge from exit holes and briefly feed on the leaves and small twigs of host trees. To fight this destructive invader, agriculture officials have removed and destroyed more than 16,000 infested or high-risk exposed trees in New Jersey, since the insect was found in the Hoboken/Jersey City area in 2002. In 2004, the infestation in the Carteret/Linden/Rahway area was discovered.

APHIS and its cooperators undertake eradication by imposing quarantines, conducting visual inspections around confirmed sites to determine the scope of infestations, removing infested and high-risk exposed trees and chemically treating host trees as part of an area-wide integrated pest eradication strategy. The goal is to eliminate this destructive insect from New Jersey before it can establish itself elsewhere.

The public can assist the eradication effort by allowing project officials access to their property to evaluate susceptible trees for any signs of ALB infestation and/or to treat trees that are susceptible to ALB infestation. For more information on the treatment program, call (732) 8154700.

The ALB is about 1 to 1.5 inches long, and has a shiny, jet-black body with distinctive white spots and long antennae banded in black and white. Suspected sightings should be reported by calling (866) BEETLE1.

APHIS, USDA's Forest Service and Agricultural Research Service, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Division of Plant Industry, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Forest and Parks, Rutgers University Department of Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension Service and the Liberty Science Center are participating in the ALB cooperative eradication

program.