

determination that release of this biological control agent will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment.

The EA and FONSI may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site (see footnote 1). Copies of the EA and FONSI are also available for public inspection at USDA, room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect copies are requested to call ahead on (202) 799-7039 to facilitate entry into the reading room. In addition, copies may be obtained by calling or writing to the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

The EA and FONSI have been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508); (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b); and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 28th day of February 2013.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2013-05141 Filed 3-5-13; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2012-0077]

Notice of Availability of New Guidelines for Pest Risk Assessments of Imported Fruits and Vegetables

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has prepared a document that describes the revised methodology that APHIS will use to conduct plant health pest risk assessments for imported fruit and vegetable commodities. These new guidelines are necessary to incorporate advancements in pest risk assessment methods, provide clearer and more transparent analyses, and streamline the market access analysis process.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Meredith Jones, Senior Regulatory

Policy Specialist, Regulatory Coordination and Compliance, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 156, Riverdale, MD 20737; (301) 851-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On October 17, 2000, under the authority of the Plant Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 7701 *et seq.*), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) began using a specific set of guidelines to conduct pathway-initiated, qualitative pest risk assessments (PRAs) for imports of fruits and vegetables. A PRA is defined by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), of which the United States is a member, as an "evaluation of the probability of the introduction and spread of a pest and the magnitude of the associated potential economic consequences." Following the characterization of the risk of the pest in the PRA, APHIS produces a risk management document to determine appropriate pest risk mitigation methods.

APHIS has determined that it is necessary to update the previous guidelines, which were developed over 10 years ago, in order to provide a more streamlined and efficient process for developing PRAs. Revising the PRA guidelines allows APHIS to incorporate advancements in PRA methods, provide a clearer, more transparent, and more logical order of progression of the assessment, and more closely align the assessments to the IPPC's international standards for phytosanitary measures. The new guidelines provide a more technically correct method of assessing risk by recognizing that the likelihood of pest introduction is multiplicative rather than additive; i.e., if one necessary step for the introduction of a pest has a low likelihood of occurring, there is an overall low likelihood of introduction of the pest, regardless of the likelihood of other steps. The new guidelines also address uncertainty, a principle not explicitly addressed in the previous guidelines. In addition, because the new guidelines are designed to make the PRA drafting process more efficient, we expect the time required to produce the PRAs and respond to market access requests to decrease.

The PRA guidelines document, entitled "Guidelines for Plant Pest Risk Assessment of Imported Fruit & Vegetable Commodities," may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2012-0077> or in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW.,

Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 799-7039 before coming. In addition, copies may be obtained by calling or writing to the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 450, 7701-7772, and 7781-7786; 21 U.S.C. 136 and 136a; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.3.

Done in Washington, DC, this 28th day of February 2013.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2012-0064]

Notice of Availability of a Treatment Evaluation Document and an Environmental Assessment for Pesticide Use in the Imported Fire Ant Program

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that we have determined that it is necessary to add and revise certain treatment schedules for the Imported Fire Ant Program in the Plant Protection and Quarantine Treatment Manual. Thus, we have prepared a treatment evaluation document that discusses the existing treatment schedules, describes the new treatment schedules, and explains why these changes are necessary. In addition, an environmental assessment has been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to pesticide use in the new and revised treatments in the imported fire ant program. The environmental assessment documents our review and analysis of environmental impacts associated with proposed new pesticides and new uses for previously approved pesticides. We are making this treatment evaluation document and environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before May 6, 2013.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=APHIS-2012-0064-0001>.

- Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Send your comment to Docket No. APHIS-2012-0064, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

The treatment evaluation document, environmental assessment, and any comments we receive may be viewed at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2012-0064> or in our reading room, which is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 799-7039 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Charles Brown, Director, Emergency Management, Emergency and Domestic Programs, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 135, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 851-2119.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The imported fire ant, *Solenopsis invicta* Buren and *Solenopsis richteri* Forel, is an aggressive, stinging insect that, in large numbers, can seriously injure or even kill livestock, pets, and humans. The imported fire ant feeds on crops and builds large, hard mounds that damage farm and field machinery. Imported fire ants are notorious hitchhikers and are readily transported long distances when articles such as soil and nursery stock are shipped outside the infested area.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) works to prevent further imported fire ant spread by enforcing a Federal quarantine and cooperating with imported fire ant-infested States to mitigate the risks associated with the movement of regulated articles such as nursery stock and used soil-moving equipment.

The regulations in “Subpart—Imported Fire Ant” (7 CFR 301.81 through 301.81-11, referred to below as the regulations) are intended to prevent the imported fire ant from spreading throughout its ecological range within the country. The regulations quarantine infested States or infested areas within States and restrict interstate movement of regulated articles to prevent the artificial spread of the imported fire ant.

Sections 301.81-4 and 301.81-5 of the regulations provide, among other things, that regulated articles requiring treatment prior to interstate movement must be treated in accordance with 7 CFR part 305, which contains our phytosanitary treatment regulations.

In § 305.2, paragraph (b) states that approved treatment schedules are set out in the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Treatment Manual.¹ Section 305.3 sets out a process for adding, revising, or removing treatment schedules in the PPQ Treatment Manual. In that section, paragraph (a) sets out the process for adding, revising, or removing treatment schedules when there is no immediate need to make a change. The circumstances in which an immediate need exists are described in § 305.3(b)(1).

In accordance with § 305.3(a)(1), we are providing notice that we have determined that it is necessary to revise the list of insecticides and use patterns, already approved for use within the existing program, for the imported fire ant program in the PPQ Treatment Manual. As pesticide registrations change under the Environmental Protection Agency’s regulations, the chemicals available for use to control imported fire ants also change. Specifically, we are adding a new immersion treatment using bifenthrin for balled-and-burlapped nursery stock and a new broadcast treatment using bifenthrin for grass sod, and clarifying the application method for drench treatment of balled-and-burlapped nursery stock.

The reasons for these revisions are described in a treatment evaluation document (TED) we have prepared to support this action. The TED may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site or in our reading room. You may also request paper copies of the TED by calling or writing to the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

APHIS’ review and analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with the addition of insecticides and use patterns to the list of chemicals allowed in the imported fire ant quarantine are documented in detail in an environmental assessment entitled “Pesticide Use in the Imported Fire Ant Program” (March 2012). We are making this environmental assessment available to the public for review and

¹The Treatment Manual is available on the Internet at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/plants/manuals/index.shtml or by contacting the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Manuals Unit, 92 Thomas Johnson Drive, Suite 200, Frederick, MD 21702.

comment. We will consider all comments that we receive on or before the date listed under the heading **DATES** at the beginning of this notice.

The environmental assessment may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site or in our reading room (see **ADDRESSES** above for a link to Regulations.gov and information on the location and hours of the reading room). You may request paper copies of the environmental assessment by calling or writing to the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. Please refer to the title of the environmental assessment when requesting copies.

The environmental assessment has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS’ NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 28th day of February 2013.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by May 6, 2013.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michele L. Brooks, Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., STOP 1522, Room 5162 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-1078. Fax: (202) 720-8435. Email: Michele.Brooks@wdc.usda.gov.