



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: DEM Conducts Tree Survey to Look for Signs of Asian Longhorned Beetle in Cranston

Date: August 21, 2009

Location: Channel 10 Studios, Kenney Drive, Cranston

Background

The Department of Environmental Management, in a cooperative effort with the USDA and Animal Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), is coordinating a comprehensive outreach and detection program for the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) in Cranston and Warwick. ALB is an invasive insect that came to the United States in wooden shipping crates from China and Korea more than 10 years ago. It affects hardwood shade trees such as maple, ash, birch, willow and elm by boring into the core of the tree and eventually killing it. This beetle has the potential of wiping out thousands of trees if it goes undetected.

DEM has targeted Cranston and Warwick for the ALB survey efforts because of the large level of industry and enterprise in these municipalities. The ALB survey took place in Cranston yesterday and today in the vicinity of Atwood Avenue and in the Howard Industrial Park, located off Pontiac Avenue. The Channel 10 studio is located in the Howard Industrial Park survey area and is being surveyed today. The Warwick survey will be conducted next week in residential and industrial areas in the vicinity of Warwick Avenue and Jefferson Boulevard. DEM has contracted with the RI Tree Council to provide technical assistance with the state's outreach and survey activities, which are designed to inform the public and keep the state ALB-free.

Survey participants are easily identifiable, dressed in orange "ALB Survey" shirts, and will be inspecting the top portion of hardwood trees using binoculars. They will be looking for signs of ALB, such as egg-laying sites and exit holes. If a survey participant needs access to private property, they will request permission from the home or business owner. Survey participants have no interest in entering homes and would like to inspect the hardwood trees only.

August is Asian Longhorned Beetle Awareness Month in RI

Governor Carcieri has declared August as Asian Longhorned Beetle Awareness Month in Rhode Island, and residents are encouraged to become familiar with the signs and symptoms of ALB. The Department is asking the public, in addition to nurserymen, commercial pesticide applicators, arborists and other tree health specialists, to notify the Department if they observe any insects resembling the ALB or see symptoms or damage related to this beetle in Rhode Island.

The beetle is large, ranging from 0.75 – 1.25 inches in length with very long black and white antennae. The body is glossy black with irregular white spots. The distinctive antennae that give the beetle its common name are as long as the body itself in females, and almost twice the body length in males. Adult ALB emerge from late spring to early fall and feed on tree bark and tender twigs. During its larval stage, the ALB bores deep in the tree's heartwood, where it feeds on the tree's nutrients. This tunneling damages and eventually kills the tree. The adult ALB then chews its way out of the tree the next summer, leaving perfectly round exit holes that are approximately 1 cm (3/8") in diameter.

Signs of ALB infestation include perfectly round, dime-sized exit holes; frass, a sawdust-like material comprised of tree shaving and insect waste; and oozing sap. Dead and dying tree limbs or branches and yellowing leaves in areas where there has been no drought may also be a sign of ALB. Research indicates this beetle can survive and reproduce in most sections of the country where suitable host trees exist.

Public Can Now Report Suspect ALB Sightings Online on DEM Website

DEM has a new online reporting form on its website for the public to use to report sightings of the ALB or Emerald Ash Borer. Developed by RI.gov, this new reporting mechanism asks for the user's valid email address and then sends an email with a link to the reporting form. The user then submits their contact information and a description of the pest. RI.gov will send the collected information to DEM on a regular basis to assist with the ongoing ALB detection program. The form is available on the DEM website, www.dem.ri.gov, by clicking on "Report Asian Longhorned Beetle" under Timely Topics on the homepage.

In addition to the online reporting mechanism, residents may also call the toll-free ALB hotline at 866-702-9938 to report any possible sightings of ALB. For further information, contact Liz Lopes-Duguay of DEM at 640-4509 or via email at liz.lopesduguay@dem.ri.gov, Bruce Payton, supervising forester in DEM's Division of Forest Environment at 647-3367 or via email at bruce.payton@dem.ri.gov, or Kate Sayles of the RI Tree Council at 764-5885 or via e-mail at albfreeri@gmail.com. Information on ALB is also available on the DEM website at www.dem.ri.gov.

News that Channel 10 Viewers Should Know:

1. Firewood transport has been identified as one of the key methods for spreading wood-boring pests from the site of an established infestation. Previous incidents at known ALB-infested sites have demonstrated the need for education regarding the proper use and transport of firewood at all levels, from campers bringing firewood to and from campgrounds, to homeowners offering downed tree limbs for free on the internet, to companies selling and shipping wood across the country.

All Rhode Island residents are reminded to purchase firewood from local sources and not transport firewood from out of state. Firewood brought into Rhode Island from infested areas can easily bring along unwanted hitch hikers like ALB and other harmful forest pests.

2. The public needs to become familiar with the signs of ALB and report them. Signs of ALB infestation include perfectly round, dime-sized exit holes; frass, a sawdust-like material comprised of tree shaving and insect waste; and oozing sap. Dead and dying tree limbs or branches and yellowing

leaves in areas where there has been no drought may also be a sign of ALB. Research indicates this beetle can survive and reproduce in most sections of the country where suitable host trees exist.

If you think you have seen this insect, please do not disturb infested trees or move any wood that you think could be affected by this pest. The beetles are visible in late July/early August primarily in upper part of trees. Residents are asked to call the toll-free ALB hotline at 866-702-9938 to report any possible sightings of ALB. Sightings can also be reported online at www.dem.ri.gov

Interviewees:

Elizabeth Lopes-Duguay, senior environmental scientist, DEM Division of Agriculture, provided information about the Asian Longhorned Beetle, and the signs of ALB that everyone should be familiar with and be on the lookout for (dime-size exit holes, beetles, etc.) She also discussed the potential devastating impact ALB could bring to trees in the state, and why it is so important to use only Rhode Island-grown firewood and not bring in firewood from out of state.

Kate Sayles of the RI Tree Council inspected trees in the Howard Industrial Park and discussed how the survey is being conducted.