

Alameda County Agriculture Staff Intercept Significant Pests from Florida

On April 15, 2014, Agriculture and Standards Investigators Keely Kirkman and Chris Craft conducted an inspection on a large shipment of nursery stock at a local wholesale nursery that was received from a grower in Florida. Shipments of nursery stock enter California through a California Department of Agriculture Border Inspection Station where station staff determines if the shipment has the proper quarantine certification to enter the state. The shipment was allowed to enter and move under a 'Warning- Hold for Quarantine Inspection' notice, which is immediately transmitted to the destination's Agricultural Commissioner's office by the station. Once the shipment arrives, the receiving nursery is required to contact the Agricultural Commissioner's office and arrange for an inspection of the shipment before exposing any portion of it for sale.

A portion of the shipment consisting of Phoenix Roebelenii (Dwarf Date Palm) was found infested with two species of weeds and two species of scale insects. Per protocol, samples of the pests were collected and sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Plant Diagnostics Lab in Sacramento for identification and the plants were placed under quarantine hold, which prevents the nursery from moving the plants from the site. The lab determined the pests to be of economic concern to California under CDFA's pest rating system and the plants were subsequently destroyed under agricultural oversight by the nursery.

This interception, one of many throughout the state every week, demonstrates the risk that the movement of nursery stock, and other unprocessed agricultural commodities, presents to California agriculture, our own back-yard gardens and the greater environment. Pest Exclusion Programs prevent pest introductions into California every day, by conducting quarantine inspections and educating both industry and the public about important risk pathways and remain one of the most important tools in preventing new pest introductions into California. The Pest Exclusion Program, combined with statewide Pest Detection and Pest Eradication Programs, succeeds in keeping California's agriculture industry, valued at over \$39 billion dollars annually, viable and competitive.