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## New Pest Advisory Group

Last Modified:

Through its Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) safeguards American agriculture and natural resources from plant pests and diseases. One of the best ways to protect U.S. plant health is to find and address new pest threats early, before they have a chance to damage the economy and the environment. PPQ's New Pest Advisory Group (NPAG)—made up of scientists, analysts, and plant health experts—is central to this work.

### What We Do

NPAG is an analytical research team. When a new pest threat arises, we rapidly assess the pest's biology; predict its potential distribution, spread, and impact on the economy and the environment; explore likely pathways and knowledge gaps; and create a brief technical report for Federal decision makers. This information is crucial to inform Federal determinations and actions that may be appropriate in the early stages of pest introduction or that may stop a pest from entering our country.

While **NPAG does not make policy**, we recommend actions PPQ might take in response to new plant pest detections, based on our risk assessments.

We focus on two kinds of plant health threats:

1. **New Pests**—recently detected in the continental United States, Hawaii, or any of the U.S. Territories, and PPQ's National Identification Services (NIS) has

officially recognized the pest's identification.

2. **Exotic Pests**—not yet present in the United States but a new (unregulated) pathway for its introduction has been identified. This includes pests newly introduced into Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

## Process Overview: Analyzing Pest Risks

The NPAG process starts when we are officially notified about a new or exotic pest. For new pests, official notification includes a confirmed PPQ report and NIS recognition. For exotic pests, written documentation from a reputable source—such as a published journal article, an official foreign government report, or a U.S. port of entry interception record—is needed.

When evaluating pest threats, we gather information from many sources: primary literature, internal and external databases, online materials, and subject matter experts (both within and outside government). The NPAG process follows the quality control procedures of reputable scientific journals and meets international standards for quality management.

## Our Reports

An NPAG report is the last step in our process. This is a brief technical report that gives key information about the pest, including: biology, hosts, distribution, and known pest status; potential pathways and likely areas where it could establish; an evaluation of possible economic, environmental, and trade impacts; available detection and control methods; current policies and regulatory activities; any uncertainties or technology and knowledge gaps; and recommendations for PPQ decision makers. Highly trained risk analysts review NPAG reports to verify the quality and completeness of scientific information in them and the conclusions drawn from the science.

Typically, NPAG reports are the first PPQ document written when a new pest is officially identified in the United States. The reports are mainly internal to APHIS, though in some cases may be shared with a wider audience and made available to stakeholders upon request.

## NPAG Recommendations

Our reports may include one or more of the following recommendations:

- Do not take action; remove pest from reportable/ actionable list
- Conduct a survey program to gather information
- Initiate an eradication or official control program
- Institute a quarantine
- Carry out a public education program to raise awareness about the pest
- Support or conduct further research

We base our recommendations on the best available information. We forward our reports to relevant PPQ decision makers and consult with the National Plant Board when deregulation is recommended. When the pest is more urgent, we may forward the report directly to the PPQ management team, which includes the Deputy Administrator. But as already mentioned, the NPAG does not set policy. PPQ leadership and program managers ultimately decide on what actions to take, if any. In doing so, they consider NPAG reports along with other factors and information, including input from stakeholders, as appropriate.

## **For More Information**

Email: [npag@usda.gov](mailto:npag@usda.gov)

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