

FOR INFORMATION  
DA-2007-28  
August 7, 2007

SUBJECT: Detections of Panicle Rice Mite, *Steneotarsonemus spinki*, in Lajas, Puerto Rico

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On August 1, 2007, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the detection of panicle rice mite (PRM), *Steneotarsonemus spinki*, at a rice research facility in Lajas, Puerto Rico. This facility, which is used to produce rice seed, is operated by the same private entity that operates the PRM-affected rice research facility in Alvin, Brazoria County, Texas. The affected Puerto Rico facility does not produce commercial rice for consumption.

This outbreak is considered to be transient, actionable, and under surveillance. APHIS has notified the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture of this confirmed detection and is currently conducting surveys to delimit this infestation on the grounds of the facility, where approximately one acre of rice was affected. APHIS is also assessing surrounding rice acreage that is in close proximity to the research facility. In addition, APHIS' PRM technical working group, which was established in response to the PRM detection in Texas, is considering survey and control strategies in response to PRM in Puerto Rico.

APHIS has issued an Emergency Action Notification to stop movement of all rice seed, rice plants and plant parts, and farm equipment from the affected field. A trace-back and trace-forward investigation is underway to determine the means of this pest's introduction at this research facility. Managers of the research facility are being fully cooperative in this investigation.

The PRM is considered a serious rice pest in China, Philippines, and Taiwan, where it has caused substantial crop losses. Yield losses can range from 30 to 90 percent. The recent PRM detection in Texas was confirmed on July 13, 2007. In 1997, the pest was detected in the Caribbean region where it is now known to affect Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. In 2002, the mite was reported in Costa Rica and Nicaragua and, in 2005, in Colombia. Recent reports also indicate its presence in Mexico. There are two main reported hosts of RPM, Rice, *Oryza sativa*, and the weedy red rice, *Oryza latifolia*.

For additional details on the Federal response to the detection of PRM, you may contact John Stewart, Eastern Regional Program Manager, at (919) 855-7333 or Valerie DeFeo, Staff Officer, at (301) 734- 4387.

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