FOR INFORMATION
DA-2005-37
November 8, 2005

SUBJECT: Detection of the Chilli thrips (*Scirtothrips dorsalis* Hood) in Florida

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On October 19th, 2005, adult specimens of the Chilli thrips, *Scirtothrips dorsalis,* were identified by the Systematic Entomology Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland from hobbyist rose plants in Palm Beach County sampled by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). Subsequently, *S. dorsalis* was confirmed on roses and peppers in the Orlando area. *S. doralis* is known from Hawaii since 1987, and there were previous detections in Florida in 1991 and 1994, however FDACS has had no detections in the intervening years.

S. dorsalis is found throughout Asia, Australia, Oceana, and some parts of Africa. The species was first reported in the Caribbean from peppers imported from the island of St. Vincent in 2003, and subsequently on St. Lucia in 2004. It has since been found on other Caribbean islands. *S. dorsalis* feeds on a wide variety of crop and ornamental hosts including peppers, eggplant, bean, tomato, cucumbers, okra, cotton, pumpkin, grape, melon, kiwi, mango, orange, onion, chrysanthemum, rose, strawberry, and banana. Feeding typically deforms leaves, flowers, and fruits and severe infestation can cause plant stunting. Individuals of this thrips species are very small and difficult to identify in the field. Adults are less than one to two millimeters in length and have a pale body with dark wings. Nymphs cannot be reliably identified and adults must be mounted on slides and identified by an experienced taxonomist.

Inspectors with FDACS and the University of Florida began surveys other areas in the State and APHIS is pursuing traceback/traceforward investigations from the initial detection. Further surveys are planned after areas in South Florida impacted by Hurricane Wilma are safe for entry. APHIS has completed pathway analysis studies for *S. dorsalis*, performed off-shore work on trapping and pesticides with the University of Florida, and has a draft New Pest Response Guidelines prepared for this pest. Further evaluations are necessary to determine the extent and possible impact of the Florida infestation.

For more information, please consult the FDACS Division of Plant Industry Pest Alert found at:
http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/ento/chillithrips.html

/s/ Richard L. Dunkle

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