



Brown Marmorated Stink Bug Regulations for Shipping Produce

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As part of a USDA Specialty Crops Research Initiative planning grant, regional meetings were held in four western states to solicit input from industry about brown marmorated stink bugs (BMSB), including four meetings in California. At the Sacramento meeting, one of the biggest concerns expressed was regulations regarding the transport of commodities across county and state lines, as well as exporting produce.

Years ago, BMSB was a Q-rated pest in California, which is a temporary "A" (most severe) rating by CDFA pending determination of a permanent rating. A few infestations were successfully eradicated when BMSB had the Q rating, including an infestation in a storage facility in Vallejo (Solano County) in 2005 and in a camper in Sheldon (Sacramento County) in 2006. In part because BMSB infestations are widespread, it now has a B rating, which means it is regulated solely at the discretion of county agricultural commissioners. To date, no BMSB damage has been reported on any farm in California, but a single adult was found in a trap near a Butte County orchard in the fall of 2014.

International Export. According to Ramona Saunders, Sacramento County Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, most foreign exports of fruits and vegetables require a phytosanitary inspection. If BMSB was found in an outgoing shipment the shipper would need to re-condition it, and a certificate would probably not be written if it couldn't be shown with a reasonable certainty that the shipment was BMSB-free. However, each country has a list of "insects and diseases of concern" and sometimes they will allow an insect that is not on that list. But no insects should be present for the majority of countries, including Canada and Mexico.

According to Duane Schnabel, CDFA Pest Exclusion Branch Chief, international export shipments are generally zero tolerance for pests. Countries may list an organism as harmful and not permitted, or hold a high standard of cleanliness. A single pest may trigger a shipment rejection or reconditioning. A federal phytosanitary inspection is required in order to clear the shipment for export.

It should be noted that shipments of non-agricultural products could also be rejected, as in Australia where some loads of cars from the US have been denied entry unless they are fumigated.

Interstate Shipping. A federal or state quarantine may be in place to restrict the movement of a harmful pest. However, BMSB is currently not a quarantine pest in any state although some states may be looking at imposing regulatory status. If a state or territory enacts a quarantine, an inspection (zero tolerance) with certification would be required for interstate shipping to that state or territory.

According to Nick Condos, Director of the CDFA Plant Health and Pest Prevention Division, BMSB is not known to have caused any trade issues. No other state has implemented an exterior quarantine against a BMSB-infested area and no foreign trading partners have specific import restrictions for BMSB host commodities. Nonetheless, another state or country may reject infested shipments if they consider BMSB a harmful pest. Normally a state or country would have to be free from BMSB in order to justify such an action. With at least 41 states now having BMSB, it is increasingly unlikely that there will be interstate shipping issues.

Shipping Across County Lines. I communicated with Agricultural Commissioner biologists from nine counties about how they will likely handle commodity shipments into their counties. BMSB populations are currently present in at least one urban area of six of the counties (San Joaquin, Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, and Butte) and as of May 2014 not yet in three of them (Napa, Sonoma, and Solano). Responses were highly variable, ranging from no regulation because BMSB is already present to potentially rejecting and returning loads if BMSB is found. Two of them said they may attempt eradication if an infestation is found, if deemed possible, but all of them realize it's a matter of time before BMSB spread throughout the state.

If a farm becomes infested and the grower wants to ship a commodity to another county, he or she would need to work with the receiving county's commissioner to understand their requirements to prevent rejection of the shipment. If BMSB is found in a load, the load could potentially be held for further evaluation, reconditioned and released, or rejected. However, most commissioners are not actively monitoring and would only know about an infestation if someone informs them.

In part, regulatory actions will depend on the situation: What is the risk? How many shipments are involved? How large is the infestation? How widespread is BMSB in the counties of origin and destination? Eventually, all BMSB regulations will certainly decline as the pest becomes more widespread. For now, it will be important to communicate with commissioners in destination counties to determine their requirements.