

 **NEWS RELEASE**

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USDA Continues Efforts to Eradicate Asian Longhorned Beetle in Ohio with Removal of Infested Trees

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5, 2012--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced today it is resuming efforts to remove Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) infested trees in Bethel, Ohio.

Infested tree removals stopped on Dec. 21, 2011 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays, and resumed on Jan. 4, 2012. Within the phase one area, the Ohio ALB Cooperative Eradication Program is continuing to remove infested trees from landscaped areas and has begun removing infested trees from woodlots. As of Dec. 21, 2011, 1,146 infested trees have been removed.

All impacted landowners will receive a legal notice letter from the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) prior to the initiation of removal operations on their properties. Program officials will be on location daily with each contractor removal crew. The program will continue to work with landowners prior to removal operations taking place. Property owners are asked to communicate any concerns with Young's General Contracting by calling (573) 785-1501 and/or APHIS by calling (513) 381-7180 in advance of tree removal work being conducted on their property.

Removed trees are chipped to less than an inch in two dimensions, which allow them to become a deregulated article. ALB life stages are either eliminated or no longer supported through the chipping process.

Chips are available for residents of Tate Township for their personal use. Residents can go to the marshalling yard, located at 2896 State Route 232 in Bethel, to pick up chips. The vehicle for transporting chips should be no larger than a light duty (GVWR) Class 3 truck or equivalent. Residents will need to provide proof of residency for Tate Township in order to receive the chips, such as a driver's license, state identification card, voter registration card or utility bill. Residents must check-in at the tower with program officials and the removal contractor upon arrival. The hours of operation for the marshalling yard are 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and it will be closed on holidays.

Surveys by ground and aerial survey staff continue in and around the regulated areas within Clermont County to identify infested trees. Surveys are currently being conducted north of State Route 232 and east of Sugartree Road and Crane Schoolhouse Road in Bethel. Surveying trees for signs of ALB is a continual process and takes place year round. Surveys are also being conducted on properties where infested trees are being removed while the ALB program staff is marking infested trees in advance of removal operations.

As initial assessment surveys ended in July and delimiting surveys began, the number of known infested trees detected has increased. APHIS will issue a second Environmental Assessment (EA) to look at the possible positive or negative impacts that a proposed course of action may have on the environment. APHIS is examining the specific Ohio ALB infestation and impact of the various options; therefore the second EA is not expected to be available for public comment until the spring of 2012. Residents can learn more about the EA process by referencing a guide issued by The Council on Environmental Quality of the Executive Office of the President, entitled "A Citizen's Guide to the National Environmental Policy Act: Having Your Voice Heard." The guide can be found online at http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/Citizens_Guide_Dec07.pdf.

As of Dec. 28, 5,081 infested trees have been identified within Tate Township, and 27 infested trees in Monroe Township. An area-wide map reflecting current program information, including the initial removal area and infested trees identified, can be found online at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/asian_lhb/alb_maps.shtml.

The Ohio ALB Cooperative Eradication Program is comprised of APHIS, Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, The Ohio State University Extension, USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Forest Service.

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