

FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION
DA-2011-45
August 5, 2011

SUBJECT: Detection of South American Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus palmarum*) in
California

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On May 9, 2011, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the first U.S. detection of the South American Palm Weevil (SAPW), *Rhynchophorus palmarum*, in the San Ysidro area of San Diego, California, and initiated delimitation surveys.

Seven additional detections of this pest were found during the month of July and into early August in the same general geographic area of San Ysidro, California. All detections were found within 2.5 miles of the U.S./Mexico border. Additional survey supplies were provided to APHIS' International Services in Mexico to determine if this pest was present in Baja, Mexico. As a result, approximately eight additional detections of this pest have been found in the Tijuana area of Baja, Mexico.

Since these detections, APHIS has worked closely with the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) and San Diego County in surveying the area of concern. Initial information received from Mexico seems to suggest that this pest may be widespread throughout Mexico.

SAPW, which is one of three 'giant' palm weevils of the genus *Rhynchophorus*, has its origins in Central and South America and is considered an important pest of palms, specifically date and coconut palms. Sugarcane is also considered a host for this pest. In addition, *R. palmarum* is a potential vector of the nematode *Bursaphelenchus cocophius*, which can cause red-ring disease in coconut and oil palms. All SAPW detections in California have been determined to be negative for *B. cocophius*.

While SAPW detections appear to be limited to the border area of San Ysidro, APHIS, in partnership with CDFA and San Diego County, are working closely together to determine the extent of the distribution and the next steps for this pest.

For additional information on *Rhynchophorus palmarum*, you may contact Eileen Smith, APHIS National Emergency Response Coordinator, at (301) 734-5235.

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