



OREGON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For release: December 1, 2009

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PRESS RELEASE

THE KHAPRA BEETLE—BRING SOMETHING ELSE, SANTA

SALEM, Oregon—If Santa has a choice on what he could bring to Oregon in December, most of the agricultural community would vote “no” on the Khapra beetle. A species that likes Oregon’s climate, can survive in just about any storage facility, and doesn’t discriminate between dog food, wheat, or cereal grains, is featured as Oregon’s Invasive Species of the Month in December—and not because it has redeeming qualities.

The Khapra beetle is considered to be one of the most serious pests of stored grain products, leguminous crops, rice, oat, barley, and rye in the world. Although it likely originated from India, like many invasive species, it has readily spread to Africa, parts of Europe, South America, and eastern Asia. It occasionally tries to enter the United States—its persistence is reflected in the average of 20 interceptions per year at United States ports and entry points—but has always been detected and immediately eradicated. It does not have known established populations in the United States, however, Oregon’s agricultural experts are on high alert.

“The Khapra beetle is not a species we want in the United States or Oregon,” said Oregon Department of Agriculture Plant Division Administrator Dan Hilburn. “Khapra beetle larvae damage and reduce the weight and grade of commodities affecting the quality of the commodity as well as the quantity. Severe infestations may make the product unpalatable and unmarketable. In addition, the mere presence of the Khapra beetle has a significant adverse economic impact on international trade because of quarantine restrictions imposed on infested countries.”

How does it continue to enter the United States? You would think that most of the beetles would hitchhike in large cargo seed containers. Not so. Over half of Khapra beetle interceptions are associated with international luggage—people coming into the United States via airports and other ports of entry with the beetle hitchhiking in the food and grain products they bring. General cargo interceptions comprise less than one quarter of interception, and ship stores comprise less

than 10 percent. That means that public outreach and education can help reduce Oregon's risk to this invader.

So Santa, if you do deliver grain product to Oregon during the holidays, do us a favor, and make sure the Khapra beetle doesn't come along for a ride.

The calendar, featured online at www.oregon.gov/OISC, provides information about each species, such as a physical description, where it is found, possible lookalike native species, and what should be done if the species is seen. In addition, Oregon teachers can benefit with species activities, an answer guide, and additional resources for further study and exploration.

The mission of the Oregon Invasive Species Council is to conduct a coordinated and comprehensive effort to keep invasive species out of Oregon and to eliminate, reduce, or mitigate the impacts of invasive species already established in Oregon.

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