

Rules and Regulations

Federal Register

Vol. 68, No. 16

Friday, January 24, 2003

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

7 CFR Part 301

[Docket No. 02–121–2]

Mexican Fruit Fly; Addition of Regulated Area

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim rule and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are revising the Mexican fruit fly regulations by adding a portion of Los Angeles County, CA, to the existing regulated area and restricting the interstate movement of regulated articles from that area. This action is necessary to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly into noninfested areas of the United States.

DATES: This interim rule was effective January 17, 2003. We will consider all comments that we receive on or before March 25, 2003.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by postal mail/commercial delivery or by e-mail. If you use postal mail/commercial delivery, please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to: Docket No. 02–121–2, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 02–121–2. If you use e-mail, address your comment to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and “Docket No. 02–121–2” on the subject line.

You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building,

14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690–2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Stephen A. Knight, Senior Staff Officer, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 134, Riverdale, MD 20737–1236; (301) 734–8247.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Mexican fruit fly (*Anastrepha ludens*) is a destructive pest of citrus and many other types of fruit. The short life cycle of the Mexican fruit fly allows rapid development of serious outbreaks that can cause severe economic losses in commercial citrus-producing areas.

The Mexican fruit fly regulations, contained in 7 CFR 301.64 through 301.64–10 (referred to below as the regulations), were established to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly to noninfested areas of the United States. The regulations impose restrictions on the interstate movement of regulated articles from the regulated areas.

In an interim rule effective on December 13, 2002, and published in the **Federal Register** on December 23, 2002 (67 FR 78127–78128, Docket No. 02–121–1), we amended the regulations by adding a portion of Los Angeles County, CA, as a regulated area. Prior to the effective date of that rule, the only areas regulated for the Mexican fruit fly were portions of Texas. In this interim rule, we are designating an additional portion of Los Angeles County, CA, as a regulated area.

Section 301.64–3 provides that the Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), shall list as a regulated area each quarantined State, or each portion of a quarantined State, in which the Mexican fruit fly has been found by an inspector, in which the Deputy Administrator has reason to believe the

Mexican fruit fly is present, or that the Deputy Administrator considers necessary to regulate because of its proximity to the Mexican fruit fly or its inseparability for quarantine enforcement purposes from localities in which the Mexican fruit fly occurs.

Less than an entire quarantined State is designated as a regulated area only if the Deputy Administrator determines that the State has adopted and is enforcing a quarantine or regulation that imposes restrictions on the intrastate movement of the regulated articles that are substantially the same as those that are imposed with respect to the interstate movement of the articles and the designation of less than the entire State as a regulated area will otherwise be adequate to prevent the artificial interstate spread of the Mexican fruit fly.

Recent trapping surveys by inspectors of California State and county agencies and by APHIS inspectors reveal that an additional portion of Los Angeles County, CA, is infested with the Mexican fruit fly.

Accordingly, to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly to noninfested areas of the United States, we are amending the regulations in § 301.64–3 by adding that portion of Los Angeles County, CA, to the existing regulated area for the Mexican fruit fly. The addition is described in detail in the rule portion of this document. The Deputy Administrator has determined that it is not necessary to designate the entire State of California as a regulated area.

Emergency Action

This rulemaking is necessary on an emergency basis to prevent the Mexican fruit fly from spreading to noninfested areas of the United States. Under these circumstances, the Administrator has determined that prior notice and opportunity for public comment are contrary to the public interest and that there is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553 for making this rule effective less than 30 days after publication in the **Federal Register**.

We will consider comments we receive during the comment period for this interim rule (see **DATES** above). After the comment period closes, we will publish another document in the **Federal Register**. The document will include a discussion of any comments