



PRESS RELEASE

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Subject: **Public Presentations on Brown Treesnake Efforts**

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Public Presentations on Brown Treesnake Efforts

Honolulu- There will be a series of public presentations on brown treesnakes this week, as part of a brown treesnake technical committee meeting. There will be seven presentations designed to inform the public about state and federal agency efforts to prevent the spread of brown treesnakes from Guam to Hawaii and the Northern Marianas Islands.

Last year typhoon Pongsona devastated Guam and severely limited the government's ability to keep brown treesnakes on Guam from crawling into cargo and vessels bound for snake-free islands like Hawaii and the Northern Marianas. Since last November, officials have worked to improve interdiction measures. The presentations will inform the public on the current status of these programs and the future direction required for improvement.

The presentations will be held on Thursday April 17, from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. at the Renaissance Ilikai Hotel in Honolulu.

Presentations will be made by:

Mike Pitzler, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services

Diane Vice, Guam Division of Aquatic And Wildlife Resources

Domingo Cravalho, Hawaii Department of Agriculture

Nathan Hawley, CNMI Division of Forestry and Wildlife

Rick Bruggers, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services-National Wildlife Research Center

Gordon Rodda, US Geological Survey-Biological Resources

Brown treesnakes were accidentally introduced to Guam in the late 1940's or early 1950's from its native range in the South Pacific, probably as stowaway in ship cargo.

Brown treesnakes were able to multiply quickly, and within 20 years they decimated Guam's native bird, bat, and lizard fauna. In the absence of preferred prey, the snakes now prey on introduced rats and lizards, which allows the snakes to maintain abnormally high population densities (about 40 snakes per acre in some areas). In addition to extirpating most of the native forest vertebrate species, brown treesnakes cause thousands of power outages each year; consume domestic birds and pets; and cause emotional and physical harm with their venomous bites, particularly to small children.

Brown treesnakes are recognized as an extreme threat to snake-free islands such as Hawaii. Hawaii's remaining native birds, its tourism, electrical power generation, and the health and quality of life of residents and visitors is at risk. The impacts (on public health, agriculture and electrical industry) reach \$400 million in annual costs to Hawaii if these snakes were to become established.

CGAPS is a statewide partnership of government agencies and NGOs working together to close the gaps in Hawaii's biosecurity. CGAPS partners meet regularly to discuss the most threatening alien pests, current actions on existing pests, and plan protection systems capable of detecting and keeping out the next silent invader.

*For more information on CGAPS, visit www.hear.org/cgaps
For more information on Brown treesnake programs, visit
www.fort.usgs.gov/resources/education/bts*

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