



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Christy Martin, Public Information Officer
CGAPS—Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species
Ph: (808) 722-0995
Email: christym@rocketmail.com

Brown Treesnake Technical Committee to hold an Update

Honolulu, Hawaii- The Brown Treesnake Technical Committee will meet at the Pacific Guardian Center Building to discuss the progress and challenges of managing this invasive species. The public and media are invited to attend.

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Wednesday March 22, 2006

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Thursday March 23, 2006

Pacific Guardian Center Building

733 Bishop St. (corner of Bishop St. and Ala Moana Blvd.)

Makai Tower Conference Rooms A, B & C.

Agency representatives from Hawaii, Guam, and the continental U.S. will provide brief overviews on their efforts related to brown treesnake control, containment and research over the past year.

Three talks that may be of particular interest:

1. 1:00 p.m. Wednesday March 22: Andersen Air Force Base Briefing. The projected increase in military activity on Guam has and will continue to impact brown treesnake control and containment programs. On September 12, 2005 Base personnel at McAlester Ammunition Plant in Oklahoma captured a live brown treesnake in a shipment of military supplies that left Guam in June. The amazing ability of this snake to move and the projected doubling of military movement from Guam is cause for significant concern.
2. 2:00 p.m. Wednesday March 22: Potential economic impact to Hawaii from the introduction of the brown treesnake. A new study has projected that the damages to Hawaii will fall within the range of \$599 million to \$1.92 billion EACH YEAR if brown treesnakes were introduced (a previous study estimated between \$28 and \$405 million per year in damages).
3. 3:00 Wednesday March 22: A review of export cargo from Guam. The movement of

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this pest is tied with the movement of vessels and cargo, yet inspection of cargo for snakes prior to departure from Guam is not mandatory. Hawaii and Saipan are two snake-free destinations for a lot of Guam cargo and have had to develop programs to meet and search uninspected crafts and cargo on arrival.

The Brown Treesnake Control Committee was formed in 1996 and is comprised of representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, and the Interior; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); the Territory of Guam; and the State of Hawaii.

Brown treesnakes are believed to have been introduced to Guam in the late 1940's or early 1950's, as a stowaway on military cargo. They were first detected around the Naval port in the 1950's and they spread across the entire 549 sq mile island within 20 years. Current population estimates are about 40 snakes per acre. Brown treesnakes are responsible for the extinction or local extirpation of nine of the 12 native forest birds, two of 11 native lizards on Guam, and have contributed to the decline of native fruit bats. The brown treesnake is the single greatest threat to terrestrial ecosystems in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands and is considered one of the greatest ecological threats to Hawaii.

On Guam, snakebites are the cause of approximately one in every 1,200 emergency room visits, with infants constituting a disproportionately high number of these cases. Brown treesnakes also cause frequent power outages—nearly 200 localized to island-wide outages occur each year, resulting in millions of dollars of losses from damaged power equipment, electrical repair costs, and lost productivity.

Additional Information

An excellent summary of the BTS invasion history on Guam can be found at:

<http://www.mesc.usgs.gov/resources/education/bts/invasion/history.asp>

Photos can be downloaded from:

http://www.hear.org/announcements/extras/20030609cgapsbtstrainingpressrelease_images.htm

Christy Martin is the Public Information Officer for the statewide Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS).

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