



PLANT
INDUSTRY

CHRISTMAS TREE INSPECTION PROGRAM

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

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I. Purpose

The Christmas tree licensing and inspection program is authorized in s. 94.10 Wis. Stat., and regulated in ATCP 21, Wis. Adm. Code. The program licenses Christmas tree growers and certifies Christmas trees apparently free of injurious pests. Growers shipping out of quarantine, interstate, and/or internationally are inspected annually to certify stock.

This document describes the steps performed in the Christmas tree program.

II. Scope

The steps described in this document are to assist the Christmas tree program lead, inspectors, and the license and permit program associate (LPPA) in the Christmas tree program process.

III. Prerequisites

A. Reference material

1. USDA Forest Service Christmas Tree Pest Manual - <http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/2014/Christmas-Tree-Pest-Manual-3rd-EditionlowRes.pdf>
2. Quick Reference Sheet for Common Christmas Tree Pests 2017 - I:\darm\pi\Christmas Trees\Chr. tree inspector folder\Quick Reference Guide for Common Christmas Tree Pests 2017.docPine Shoot Beetle Inspection Protocol – <I:\darm\pi\Christmas Trees\Pests>
3. Lab sample protocol - <I:\darm\pi\PIB-LAB\Forms\ARM-PI-247-instructions>
4. USDA Gypsy Moth Program Manual - https://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/plants/manuals/domestic/downloads/gypsy_moth.pdf

B. Tools

1. Hand lens
2. Flagging tape
3. Pruners/knife/hand saw
4. Shovel
5. Plastic sample bags of various sizes
6. Garbage bags
7. Bleach or other disinfectant
8. Vials and jars for insect samples

C. Forms

1. Assigned inspection forms
2. Blank inspection forms - I:\darm\pi\Christmas Trees\Grower and Field Inspections\blank ch tree insp rpt
3. Lab forms - I:\darm\pi\PIB-LAB\Forms\ARM-PI-247-PIB-LAB-Sample-form
4. Licensing information and application (for new / unlicensed growers)



IV. Responsibilities

A. Christmas Tree Program Lead

1. Organize Christmas tree inspection reports and assign inspections to inspectors
2. Act as liaison between DATCP and USDA for Christmas tree interstate shippers
3. Issue restriction and treatment letters
4. Represent DATCP at Christmas tree industry events
5. Provide Christmas tree growers with information about pests, state laws and regulations
6. Tabulate Christmas tree inspection results and provide that information for meetings and annual reports
7. Lead and moderate program evaluation

B. License and Permit Program Associate (LPPA)

1. Process and issue Christmas tree grower license (see Nursery and Christmas Tree Licensing SOP)
2. Create inspection field report in AMANDA, send for printing
3. Run query for Christmas tree growers shipping out of state
4. Issue and mail PHCs
5. Print Christmas tree lot inspection reports

C. Inspectors

1. Inspect Christmas Tree fields
2. Issue State compliance agreements
3. Inform growers of lab results
4. Educate unlicensed growers about licensing requirements
5. Ensure licensing and quarantine regulation compliance

V. Procedure

A. Licensing – see [Nursery and Christmas Tree Licensing SOP](#)

B. Interstate Shippers

1. After the majority of licenses are processed and before the inspection season begins, in July or August, the LPPA runs a query in the database to create a list of Christmas tree growers shipping out of state. This list includes contact and mailing information. LPPA provides list to Christmas tree program lead to review. Christmas tree program lead then provides list to USDA – these growers will be required to have a USDA compliance agreement if they are growing trees within the gypsy moth quarantine and/or shipping pine out of state.

C. Field Inspection Reports

1. In July or early August, LPPA creates a pdf file of the Christmas tree field inspection reports and sends to the Christmas tree program lead for review. After approval of the document, LPPA sends pdf to be printed. Christmas tree program lead receives printed inspection reports to organize.



2. For Christmas tree growers obtaining a license after Christmas tree inspection report file has been printed, LPPA will create inspection reports and email them to the proper inspector and the Christmas tree program lead. If the grower ships out of state, Christmas tree program lead will provide contact information to the USDA.
3. Inspection reports are organized by county, keeping roughly with the nursery inspection territories but adjusting to evenly distribute the work load.
 - a. Jackson, Waushara, Lincoln, Langlade, Taylor, and Price counties are organized on a township level with coordinating maps due to the large concentration of Christmas tree growers in these counties. Inspectors assigned to these counties can choose to inspect these fields themselves or coordinate a group inspection.
 - b. Christmas tree program lead distributes inspection reports to inspectors, requesting that any inspector wishing to coordinate a group inspection determine the dates early to avoid overlap and complete all group inspections before mid-October. When it is established what counties will be inspected as a group, the Christmas tree program lead sends out a department wide email with the dates of all the group inspections, counties included in group inspections and inspectors in charge of each county.
 - c. Inspectors coordinating a group inspection send out a department wide email with dates, times, and meeting locations within a week of the group inspection.

D. Field Inspections

1. Beginning in September, when gypsy moth egg mass deposition is complete, inspections of Christmas tree fields begin. Interstate shippers and growers requesting a PHC are priorities, the goal is to have these fields inspected by October 15. Non-interstate shippers and choose and cut growers are inspected as time allows.
2. Christmas tree fields are inspected to be certified free of regulatory pests.
 - a. Gypsy moth – inspect premises, Christmas trees and all preferred hosts surrounding the field for signs of gypsy moth.
 - i). If gypsy moth egg masses are found, place flagging ribbon on the tree/branch/object where the egg mass was found. Record on the inspection report the location of the egg mass in relation to the field, the proximity of the Christmas trees, tree species egg mass was found on, and number of egg masses found. GPS and a drawn map in the comments/regulatory action section of the inspection report should be included.
 - ii). If old egg masses, pupae or skins are found, make note of where they are located but be sure to note they are old to differentiate them from any new life stage finds. Old egg masses may provide information on where in the field gypsy moth life stages are likely to be found but are not considered a viable life stage to base restrictions on.
 - iii). If no gypsy moth egg masses are found, the absence of gypsy moth life stages needs to be written on the inspection report to confirm the field inspected and found free of gypsy moth.



- iv). Christmas tree program lead will send growers with viable egg mass finds restriction letters. Restrictions will be established by Christmas tree program lead based on the risk level – determined by number of egg masses found, proximity to saleable Christmas trees, and previous history of the field. Restriction letter includes a) copy of the inspection report b) letter detailing the scope of the restrictions and c) current quarantine map.
- b. Pine shoot beetle – interstate growers with pine trees need to be inspected for pine shoot beetle, following the pine shoot beetle protocol
 - i). If a pine shoot beetle suspect is found, a sample must be collected, lab form completed and sent to entomologist for confirmation. Entomologist will notify the inspector and Christmas tree program lead of the results.
 - ii). If no pine shoot beetle suspects are found, the absence of pine shoot beetle needs to be written on the inspection report to confirm the field inspected and found free of pine shoot beetle.
- 3. Christmas trees are inspected for general pest, diseases, and plant health.
 - a. Identifiable insects, diseases, or abiotic problems are written on the inspection report, with the incidence and severity noted.
 - b. If an unknown disease or insect is found or a grower requests it, a sample is taken, bagged, labeled, a lab report filled out, and sent to the PIB lab for diagnosis. Tools used to obtain sample are disinfected. When diagnosis is complete, lab personnel will send the completed diagnosis to the submitting inspector and Christmas tree program lead. The inspector notifies the grower of the results.
- 4. Christmas tree inspection reports are signed by all inspectors participating in the inspection, dated and returned to the Christmas tree program lead
 - a. The original white copy is kept on file at DATCP, the second yellow copy is given to the grower and the third pink copy is kept by the inspector.
 - b. Christmas tree program lead scans and emails, faxes, or copies and mails field inspection reports of growers shipping out of state and needing a USDA compliance agreement to the USDA.
 - c. Completed inspection reports are filed in an alphabetized accordion file, one file per year. Previous years inspection reports are stored in the Madison office. Current year's inspections stored at Christmas tree program lead's office.
 - d. LPPA to scan inspection reports onto the I drive each season (by January 15)
I:\darm\pi\Christmas Trees\Grower and Field Inspections\
 - e. Staff to enter insect and disease data into Christmas Tree Inspections Access database located here: I:\darm\pi\Christmas Trees\Christmas Tree Inspections.accdb



E. Restrictions for growers with regulatory pests

1. Christmas tree program lead will send growers with viable gypsy moth egg mass finds restriction letters. Restrictions will be established by Christmas tree program lead based on USDA Gypsy Moth Manual and risk level – determined by number of egg masses found, proximity to saleable Christmas trees, and previous history of the field. Restriction letter includes a) copy of the inspection report b) letter detailing the scope of the restrictions and c) current quarantine map.
2. In early spring, Christmas tree program lead will send treatments letters to growers with egg masses found the previous fall. Growers shipping trees out of areas of the field that were restricted, need to apply proper pesticide. The mailing will include a copy of the inspection report, quarantine map, list of USDA approved treatments, list of aerial applicators, treatment record and return envelope. Completed treatment records will be filed in Madison office.
3. Christmas tree program lead will notify USDA of any growers shipping out of state with positive pine shoot beetle finds. Any field with pine shoot beetle is prohibited from leaving the PSB quarantine area.

F. Plant Health and Phytosanitary Certificates

1. LPPA will batch process and mail out PHCs to the Christmas tree growers in late September. Any request after the initial mailing is processed and issued manually by the LPPA.
2. Phytosanitary certificates are issued to growers who apply via PICT.

G. Lot inspections

1. LPPA prints blank Christmas tree lot inspection reports and sends to inspectors.
2. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, lots are inspected. Inspectors collect information on where the lot is located, where the Christmas trees originated, the grower who supplied the trees, the lot operator, check certification when needed and survey for insects and diseases. This information is recorded on the lot inspection report, signed and dated by the inspector.
 - a. If the grower supplying the trees is located in Wisconsin, check to make sure they are have a current DATCP Christmas tree license in AMANDA or inquire with the inspector for the county the trees came from.
 - i). If the grower supplying the trees is located in Wisconsin and has a current license, write yes in the Licensed box on the inspection report. No further action is required.
 - ii). If the grower supplying the trees is located in Wisconsin and does not have a current license, write no in the Licensed box on the inspection report.
 - iii). If grower without license is also lot operator – supply grower with current license application, licensing information, and record these actions on the inspection report. Follow up with LPPA within two weeks to check if grower obtained a license.



- iv). If grower without license is not the lot operator – call the grower to inform them of Christmas tree grower license that is required. Mail, fax, or scan and email a copy of the license application and licensing information to the grower. Record these actions on the inspection report. Follow up with the LPPA within two weeks to check if grower obtained a license. If grower is located within another inspector’s territory, inform that inspector of unlicensed grower.
- b. If the grower supplying the trees is from out of state, record name, address, and counties trees originated from (if information is available) on the inspection report, leaving the licensed box blank. Record any certification paperwork that came with the trees.
- c. For lots in counties outside of the gypsy moth quarantine, compliance paperwork is required for any trees supplied from counties or states within the quarantine. No compliance paperwork is required for trees supplied from outside the quarantine.
 - i). Trees originating from a county within the quarantine but without a state or federal compliance agreement, proceed following Compliance Agreement SOP. A state compliance agreement is not required if grower has federal compliance agreement (indicating they ship out of state). A state compliance agreement is required if a grower moves trees grown within the gypsy moth quarantine to counties out of the quarantine but only within Wisconsin.
 - ii). Trees originating from a quarantined state other than WI without a federal compliance agreement, inform Christmas tree program lead.
Christmas tree program lead will notify USDA of trees leaving quarantine without compliance paperwork.
- 3. Completed lot inspection reports – original white copy returned to Christmas tree lead, second yellow copy given to lot operator, pink copy kept by inspector. Completed lot inspections filed by Christmas tree program lead.

VI. Quick Guide for Inspectors

A. Inspection tools and forms – see II. Prerequisites

B. Field Inspection Reports

1. Sign and Date
2. Gypsy Moth
 - a. State presence or absence of GM egg masses
 - b. Location and number of egg masses
 - c. Proximity of egg masses to Christmas trees
 - d. Distinguish between old and new egg masses



3. Pine Shoot Beetle (for fields with Pine)
 - a. Follow PSB inspection protocol – see II. Prerequisites
 - b. State presence or absence of PSB on report
 - c. If PSB is suspected, take sample to confirm with entomologist
 4. Record pests or diseases found and incidence and severity of damage
 5. Update directions, if needed
 6. Update GPS, if needed
 7. Return original completed reports to Christmas tree program lead
- C. Lot inspection Reports**
1. Sign and date
 2. Record location of lot and lot operator
 3. Record Christmas tree grower(s) providing trees to the lot
 4. Determine if certification is required (see H. Lot Inspections)
 - a. Provide compliance information if needed
 5. Determine if lot operator or Christmas tree grower supplying trees has or needs a Christmas tree license (see H. Lot Inspections)
 - a. Provide license application to lot operator/Christmas tree grower if needed
 6. Return original completed reports to Christmas tree program lead



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