

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Plant Pest and Disease Specialist – Senior

POSITION SUMMARY:

This is a professional position with responsibilities in the plant sciences, emphasizing plant pest regulatory compliance related to the implementation of the statewide potato program. The position is responsible for technical program direction and coordination of work for assigned areas; the position also provides support to management in assessing program rule or policy modifications. It functions under general supervision working independently with a great deal of autonomy and discretion. The position works closely with the Northern Unit Supervisor, Plant Protection Section Manager, Pest Survey & Control Section Manager, and the Export Certification Program Coordinator.

The principal duties of the position are to:

- (1) serve as the expert who coordinates and implements the potato program, including inspecting potato fields, conducting annual certified seed potato program audits, and enforcing potato rot nematode, certified seed potato and late blight regulations;
- (2) conduct inspections of nursery plants, Christmas trees, firewood, logs, lumber, seeds, agricultural crops and other plant products for plant health certification;
- (3) manage program area compliance activities, implementing and enforcing plant pest regulations and plant protection laws, particularly pest quarantine, nursery and seed laws;
- (4) coordinate the audit of ginseng for export to Taiwan or other international markets as needed, including inspection of gardens for regulated pests;
- (5) identify and assess insect pests, diseases and weeds on a wide range of agricultural products and crops; and
- (6) provide timely and objective regulatory outreach to the state's plant industry community via one-on-one or group trainings, presentations, tradeshow exhibits, phone conversations, email updates, social media, webpages, factsheets, radio, video and print media.

Duties also include evaluation of potato program functions, including assessment of workload, administrative rules, procedures and fees. This position will also be required to collect regulatory samples for laboratory analysis and provide input on risk assessments of regulated pests. This position may serve as a department representative on committees and with external organizations, functioning as technical expert and resource. Information discussed and obtained from meetings is utilized to make recommendations to management staff on program direction.

GOALS AND WORKER ACTIVITIES:

40% GOAL A: Management and assessment, including overall program evaluation of the potato program; this includes serving as a lead and technical resource for compliance actions, workload analysis and coordination of annual potato field inspections, administration of program policies and procedures, development of training plans, conducting outreach to impacted stakeholders, writing grants and assisting with rule modifications.

- A.1 Plan, direct and coordinate annual potato rot nematode (PRN) inspection activities for the potato program. Collaborate with the University of Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program (WSPCP) to determine fields needing inspection, notify growers and obtain harvest schedules, prepare work plans including field maps and train and coordinate inspection staff to cover field inspections at the time of harvest. Ensure suspect PRN samples are properly collected and immediately delivered to the PIB Lab for analysis and verbally notify the impacted grower.
- A.2 Ensure protocols are followed in the event of a positive PRN detection; issuing a Notice of Infestation and a Quarantine Order to the affected grower upon PIB Laboratory confirmation of a suspect PRN sample. Provide prompt notification to WSPCP. Enter

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data into the potato rot nematode database and maintain accurate records to readily update PRN status maps in impacted counties. Provide an updated map to the WSPCP annually, or as needed.

- A.3. Conduct the annual audit of WSPCP to ensure conformance with ATCP 156. Coordinate collection of farm records from WSPCP for review, develop audit questions, schedule and host the audit meeting and write the audit report. Ensure the report is provided to WSPCP in a timely manner.
- A.4. Oversee the annual review process for Certified Seed Potato Waiver Requests. Review requests, organize grower information, schedule meetings with University of Wisconsin partners, and provide final communication to growers regarding Department decisions in advance of the annual potato shipping and planting seasons. Maintain complete and accurate files for all requests received.
- A.5. Coordinate and ensure timely updates to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DATCP and USDA-APHIS for the State National Harmonization Plan for seed potatoes, engaging with the WSPCP as needed to effectively accomplish this effort.
- A.6. Write and organize regular program evaluations and annual reports to identify improvements, analyze workload and prepare annual work plans. Develop and implement procedures and policies and update as needed.
- A.7. As the technical expert, recommend and enforce compliance actions for violations of statutes and codes. Develop compliance cases including conducting investigations, collecting evidence, writing and filing complaints and special orders and facilitating compliance conferences.
- A.8. Educate potato producers of law requirements and changes. Develop training aids, technical manuals and other resource information to train staff, cooperators and industry stakeholders. Provide educational opportunities as needed. Deliver training programs upon request.
- A.9. Evaluate and keep Wisconsin laws updated and consistent with other potato producing states to maintain continuity across the industry. Research and interpret provisions of the laws and regulations affecting the program areas; serve as a technical resource to other Bureau staff and managers, disseminating updated program information or interpretations in a timely manner.
- A.10. Recommend revisions or the creation of statutes, rules or policies affecting plant pests or their hosts, specifically regulations to protect certified seed and commercial potatoes.
- A.11. Represent the department at stakeholder and industry annual meetings as needed (e.g. Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA), Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association (WSPIA), etc.).

40% GOAL B: Surveillance and inspection of nursery plants, Christmas trees, forest products agricultural crops and commodities for plant health and export certification.

- B.1. Inspect perennials at nursery grower and nursery dealer locations to determine apparent freedom from significant regulatory plant pests, viability, and adherence to labeling and licensing requirements.
- B.2. Inspect Christmas trees for regulated plant pests for export certification, regulatory compliance, and to provide pest management recommendations.
- B.3. Perform field or shipping point inspections of firewood, logs, lumber, agricultural crops and other plant products for regulated pests, and / or to certify products for export.

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- B.4 Enforce state and federal plant pest quarantine regulations to ensure that regulated industries are in compliance.
- B.5 Enforce plant protection laws and rules, including issuing notices of noncompliance, orders prohibiting sale or movement and pest abatement orders to bring regulated plant industries into compliance.
- B.6 Inspect seed labels and collect official seed samples to ensure compliance with the seed law.
- B.7 Respond to industry and public requests for information on quarantine compliance, plant health certification and other regulatory programs by correspondence, over the phone and in person.
- B.8 Promptly enter and submit inspection data and compliance documents into central program databases.
- B.9 Assist with audits of nurseries or other plant product facilities as needed.

10% GOAL C: Perform Plant Regulatory Outreach

- C.1 Provide plant pest and regulatory presentations and training to plant industry businesses and groups.
- C.2 Represent the department at tradeshow and assist with staffing plant industry bureau tradeshow exhibits.
- C.3 Provide timely and objective regulatory plant pest outreach to the state's agricultural community via one-on-one or group trainings, presentations, email, social media, radio, video and print media.
- C.4 Participate in plant industry association, nonprofit, scientific and agency meetings, trainings and webinars related to plant pests.

5% GOAL D: Coordinate the annual audit of ginseng exported to Taiwan.

- D.1 Function as the primary liaison between DATCP and all partners and stakeholders involved in the audit including USDA-APHIS, the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin, the Taiwanese delegation, the University of Wisconsin and the ginseng producer(s).
- D.2 Connect with ginseng producer(s) to obtain relevant information about the ginseng gardens intended for export well in advance of the audit.
- D.3 Collaborate with PIB lab staff and University of Wisconsin nematologists to develop sampling plans for gardens intended for export.
- D.4 Collect soil samples from exporting gardens and deliver to the University of Wisconsin Nematology Lab for analysis and provide sample results to the producer and other audit participants.
- D.5 Participate in the annual 3-day audit, serving as the primary DATCP representative, attending the opening and closing meetings, gathering and providing copies of audit materials and providing the soil sampling demonstration.
- D.6 Coordinate ginseng audit efforts for other international markets as needed.

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5% GOAL E: Technical Projects and Responsibilities

- E.1 Assist Bureau program coordinators with participation in program evaluations, work planning, group inspections, and compliance initiatives for plant industries.
- E.2 Participate in bureau strategic planning and implementation, continuous improvement projects, and agency committee work.
- E.3 Collaborate with federal and state agency partners and university researchers on applied research, plant pest risk assessments, policies and other projects as needed.
- E.4 Perform other related duties as assigned by the supervisor.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED BY THIS POSITION:

- A. Considerable working knowledge of the plant sciences, emphasizing a background in the natural sciences including entomology, plant pathology, horticulture or other closely related fields.
- B. Working knowledge of the identification, life cycles, hosts, distribution and management alternatives of regulatory plant pests and diseases. Emphasis is on regulated forest pests and the economically important pests and pathogens of potatoes and major ornamental crops.
- C. Considerable knowledge of tree nursery, greenhouse and farm practices in Wisconsin and their impact on pest management.
- D. Knowledge of forest products operations, timber management and log and lumber operations.
- E. Considerable knowledge of the principles of plant pest and disease regulation, including quarantine compliance and enforcement, regulatory inspections and audits.
- F. Strong working knowledge in the field identification of plants including nursery stock, Christmas trees, agronomic, vegetable and other crops.
- G. Knowledge of cultural, biological and chemical control practices used to manage pests and the principals of integrated pest management.
- H. Ability to effectively communicate through presentations, media, and written materials (e.g., interviews/personal appearances by radio, television or newspaper; public speaking; educational brochure and fact sheet development).
- I. Well-versed in a variety of computer software packages including word processing, spreadsheets, and presentations, and knowledgeable in electronic communication tools, such as email, text messaging, and video calls. Knowledge of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and electronic field data collection.
- J. Effective networking and liaison skills with program-related partners (e.g. University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA), USDA-APHIS, tribes, nursery, Christmas tree and forest products industry associations).

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Special Requirements:

- 1) Travel will be required for approximately 50% of this position's duties, with some overnight stays required.
- 2) Possession of a current, valid driver's license or the ability to provide one's own transportation for work purposes.
- 3) Ability to walk in rough terrain and work outdoors in potentially inclement and adverse weather conditions, including heat, humidity, rain, wind and cold.