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Hong Kong

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Red Fire Ants Detected in Hong Kong

2005

Approved by:

Lloyd Harbert

U.S. Consulate General, Hong Kong

Prepared by:

David Wolf, Caroline Yuen

Report Highlights:

Following the detection of suspected red fire ants in a Hong Kong wetland park, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department has set up a special task force to deal with this issue. If confirmed, this would be reportedly the first time red fire ants have been discovered in Hong Kong. The ants are suspected to have been brought in the territory with imported plants from China.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Hong Kong [HK1]
[HK]

There were suspected traces of red fire ants in the Hong Kong Wetland Park, Tin Shui Wai on January 26, 2005. Immediately the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) set up a special task force to deal with the possible intrusion of the exotic ants into the territory. So far, no ant biting cases on human has been reported.

Every year when Chinese New Year is approaching, tangerine trees and festival flowers flow into Hong Kong. It is an exception this year. Trees and flowers, which were intended to be exported to Hong Kong for sale before the Chinese New Year, have been quarantined in Shenzhen (a city in the southern part of China adjacent to Hong Kong). The Chinese provincial quarantine authorities revealed on January 24 the possible ant infestation on plants, which therefore warrants quarantine. Reportedly, mainland provincial quarantine authorities were put on alert two months ago because of the ant infestation.

Following the AFCD's spotting up to 10 ant hills in a wetland park on January 26, the ant hills were sprayed with pesticide. The government immediately set up a special task force and classified the detection as suspected cases while samples were taken for examination. The contingency plan includes a range of measures to combat the ants, such as dispatching a 300 member team to patrol country parks and inspect all the local flower farms in the next few days and advising local farmers to stay vigilant in monitoring pest conditions. The AFCD also issued guidelines to farmers and plant traders on ways to eradicate the pest. Moreover, AFCD has set up a special treatment area to inspect potted plants from China. An AFCD representative commented that if necessary, imported potted plants will be disinfected at the treatment area before they are dispatched to local farms, markets or individual households.

The ants, native to South America, can inflict a painful sting which, in turn, can cause serious allergic reactions in humans – even death in some cases.

According to the Plant (Importation and Pest) Control Ordinance, any plant imported into Hong Kong must be accompanied by a Plant Import License and a valid phytosanitary certificate while the importation of soil needs to have prior approval from the Director of AFCD. However, the importation of plants and soil from China is exempted from the requirements.

Hong Kong's Imports of Nursery Products and Cut Flowers, Jan – Nov

Country	Millions of US Dollars			% Share		% Change	
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004 - 04/03	-
--The World--	51	45	45	100	100	100	0
China	27	27	27	52	59	59	0
Netherlands	8	6	5	17	13	11	-18
Malaysia	2	2	3	4	4	6	52
Thailand	3	2	2	5	5	5	-16
Taiwan	3	2	2	5	4	4	-13
Australia	1	0	1	3	1	3	210
New Zealand	1	1	1	2	3	3	17
United States	1	1	1	2	1	1	-1