



California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association

Issue Fact Sheet

Issue: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USDA-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA) and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) for the use of canine inspection teams in domestic mail facilities.

Background: Historically, California agricultural commissioners have regularly inspected domestic mail shipments for the presence of agricultural pests. These inspections were limited to 2nd through 4th class parcel shipments that were typically marked as containing plant material and were available for inspection. Some un-marked packages come to the attention of the agricultural commissioner as a result of cooperation with postal staff that observes irregularities that indicate plant material may be involved. In those cases permission has been obtained from the addressee or an inspection warrant has been obtained to allow lawful inspection of the package contents. The data gathered through these inspections led to the development of an MOU to allow CDFA, the state agency that directs the work of agricultural commissioners, to carry out inspections in the postal facility using canines to detect unmarked plant shipments. The MOU was formerly entered into between APHIS, CDFA and USPS (believed to be) from 1998-2003 to allow for a pilot inspection and interdiction program in California, known as the California Mail Interdiction Pilot Program (CMIPP). The CMIPP established operation guidelines for the interdiction of U.S. mail destined for delivery in California that may contain plants, plant products or plant pests (plant material) subject to federal quarantine. Packages selected by APHIS/CDFA in mail processing facilities designated by the USPS were subjected to detection by canines trained to alert to plant material. The CMIPP targeted inspection efforts beginning at the USPS Processing and Distribution Center in Industry, California. Locations designated as high-risk by APHIS and CDFA including Santa Ana, Los Angeles, Oakland and San Jose, were added at later intervals of the program.

The program was established as interdiction data from CDFA showed that commercial shipping companies were moving agricultural products, some of which contain harmful pests to agriculture. Some examples include: 26 instances of host material found from Puerto Rico, several containing live fruit fly larvae; packages from Florida with prohibited or restricted material. This data from commercial shipping companies could indicate host material being shipped illegally through U.S. mail.

From 1988-1997, CDFA rejected 3,489 parcels, including mail, for various State and Federal quarantine violations. Of these, 189 were federal domestic quarantine violations. CDFA implemented a successful program using canines trained to respond to specific plant scents at commercial shipping facilities. A similarly successful program continues to work in Hawaii between APHIS, USPS and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Status: A one-year Memorandum of Understanding was re-instituted and signed on December 15, 2009. To date, two canine teams have been conducting inspections at the San Jose USPS facility. Below is a summary of interceptions for the San Jose USPS.

SUMMARY San Jose US Postal Facility March 2010 – January 2011

Total Parcels Alerted on by CA Dog Team	1029
Of Total, Number Parcels Authorized to Inspect	367
Of Total, Number Parcels Rejected for Violation of Plant Quarantines/Laws	375

The current MOU remains in effect pending agreement renewal. Current negotiations are likely to add four USPS distribution centers including:

- West Sacramento (Yolo County)
- San Diego
- Los Angeles
- Oakland

Under the renewed MOU, of the total 23 USPS distribution centers throughout California, inspections will be conducted at 6 locations.

CDFA continues to develop procedures to obtain necessary warrants from the federal magistrate. Until this procedure is in place inspectors may only open priority, 1st class and special delivery parcels after obtaining the sender's or receiver's permission. To date inspectors have opened the standard "B" class parcels that the dogs hit on and a few of the priority packages when permissions were obtained.

Unquestionably there remains an increased risk of invasive pests and diseases infiltrating the U.S. due to the ease of today's interstate and international movement of people and commerce. After the first two weeks of conducting inspections at the USPS facility there have been a much higher incidence of unmarked parcels containing, or at least suspected of containing, agricultural products than what we typically find at UPS/FedEx type of facilities.

Since 1993, the value of U.S. agricultural imports has nearly tripled to over \$70 billion. Over the same period, the value of U.S. agricultural exports has nearly doubled from about \$43 billion to \$82 billion. International passenger arrivals have increased from 44.2 million to 76.4 million. Volumes of air cargo are doubling every five to six years and an increasing percentage of this cargo consists of perishable commodities such as cut flowers, fruits and vegetables.

With recent efforts by USPS to consolidate postal and distribution centers in California; the use of canine inspection teams will be more effective and will enhance parcel inspection and surveillance efforts at USPS facilities.

Action Item: Request APHIS, USPS, and CDFA, to renew the MOU that expired in December 2010; which will allow USDA, CDFA and CACASA staff and canine teams to continue parcel inspections of the USPS facilities that may be a possible pathway for pest and disease harmful to agriculture and the environment.