

Prevention of the Movement of Insect Pests by Humans

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The movement of insect pests by humans is an ongoing phenomenon that is becoming increasingly problematic. New pests are being introduced into the country and then spread by humans unintentionally. To be sure, insects will spread by themselves, but a movement by humans accelerates this process greatly. Insects may be moved by humans when plant material or animals are moved with or without vehicles. Additionally, insects may be moved when products are shipped from county to county.

This is a call for the public and businesses to become more involved in reducing the movement of pests by humans. When any plant is moved, use excessive measures to prevent the movement of pests. Before moving potted plants long distances, drench the soil with products containing a systemic insecticide. That will kill insects in the soil and travel up the xylem into the leaves. It will not go down the phloem in most cases. The xylem transports water and some nutrients up the plant to the leaves. The phloem transports sugars and other products down the plant from the leaves. Spray the plant with malathion or a pyrethroid mixed with insecticidal soap. That will kill insects on the surface of the plant. Make sure all the above-ground parts of the plant are covered with insecticide. If you miss a spot, you have moved the insect. Use caution not to burn the plant with soap.

Spraying a plant even when you don't see the pest seems to be against integrated pest management practices; however, moving pests to a new area is an even greater violation of integrated pest management practices. Make sure animals are not infested with arthropods before moving them. Follow all quarantine procedures. Remind other people to make sure they are not moving pests. This comes at a cost, but the costs of moving a pest to a new area are vastly greater. For example, the emerald ash borer has been introduced in the United States. This insect is expected to drive all species of ash trees native to North America to extinction. Different insect pests may require different methods to prevent their movement based on their biology. Nurseries must abide by applicable regulations and laws. They must also consider the wishes of their customers when selling plants. Businesses are strongly encouraged to implement procedures to reduce the movement of insects. This will increase costs to businesses but failing to do so will result in greater costs of living with and managing new insect pests that did not previously exist in the country. In summary, this is a call for the public and businesses to become much more involved in preventing the spread of insect pests.