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Managing Spotted Lanternfly in Pennsylvania: A Collective Responsibility, an Opportunity to Capitalize on for PA Businesses

Cheswick, PA – At Eichenlaub Inc. in Allegheny County, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Dean Rick Roush, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Administrator Carlos Martinez today provided an update on the state of spotted lanternfly in Pennsylvania and the path to beating this invasive species.

Eichenlaub Inc., a landscape business, is one of more than 26,000 businesses that have stepped up to the responsibility of holding a spotted lanternfly permit. While he hasn't seen spotted lanternfly on his properly, Dan Eichenlaub, president, has traps for the bad bug around his property and maintains vigilance with inspections to ensure they're not contributing to the spread of spotted lanternfly to new areas of the state or nation.

"The spotted lanternfly is the worst bug in the commonwealth and capable of causing real damage to Pennsylvania's $132.5 billion agriculture industry," said Redding. "Over the past seven years, we've seen lanternfly travel from east to west in the commonwealth. We've seen vineyards devastated. It's invasive environmentally, socially, and economically.

"But there is good news: Pennsylvania is home to 12.8 million people who are part of the solution. Working together, we can slow the spread. Working together, we can stomp out the threats of this invasive pest," added Redding.

The spotted lanternfly came to Pennsylvania in 2014 and has since spread to 34 counties across the commonwealth. To slow the spread and mitigate against harm, these counties are under a quarantine that relies on an educated population of residents and businesses to help contain the pest.

The responsibility to contain and manage spotted lanternfly is collective and falls on state and federal government combined with university research and extension education; plus educated and engaged residents and permitted, attentive business owners. Residents and homeowners within the quarantine are encouraged to be familiar with the life stages of the spotted lanternfly and use the Checklist for Residents to effectively monitor their property and keep from transporting the pest from their property to a new location. Sightings of spotted lanternfly should be reported by calling 1-888-4BAD-FLY or using the online reporting tool. This will assist a rapid response to control the outbreak before it becomes well established, as well as serve to assist officials in monitoring spotted lanternfly populations across the state.

Businesses that operate in or travel through the quarantined counties are required to obtain a free spotted lanternfly permit which comes with the responsibility of maintaining a trained, engaged workforce. Businesses that violate permit requirements are subject to up to $300 per violation plus court costs. Besides being the law, being permitted is good for business. Being permitted not only raises awareness of responsibilities for businesses working in the quarantine

area but allows for continued safe trade and commerce. A business that obtains a permit is demonstrating its commitment to protecting its customers, its community, and the environment. A Spotted Lanternfly Business Toolkit is available to help operations learn about why the spotted lanternfly is bad, how the quarantine works, if they need a permit, and their responsibilities of holding a permit.

In addition to help from residents and business, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) has enlisted the help of man's best friend with a spotted lanternfly-sniffing dog: Lucky. A female German Shepherd, Lucky was trained as a puppy at PennVet's Working Dog Center to detect Spotted Lanternfly eggs. Lucky joined the department in November 2020 and helps to inspect businesses like nurseries, greenhouses, vehicle fleets, and log yards. She is the first dog in the nation trained to detect Spotted Lanternfly.

At Penn State, researchers are working tirelessly to gather scientific data on how to contain and manage this pest around homes, parks, buildings, nurseries, vineyards and fruit farms, noted Rick Roush, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences.

These projects run the gamut from the basic biology of the pest to economic damage from feeding to its feeding preferences to the efficacy of biological and chemical control and detection methods.

"Spotted lanternfly is a complex pest, but we are making discoveries and sharing those findings as soon as we can with the public and government and industry stakeholders," Roush said. "Our research objectives regarding the spotted lanternfly are clear — to find sustainable long-term solutions that are effective and environmentally safe."

Penn State Extension educators, volunteer Master Gardeners and Master Watershed Stewards, and other staff and faculty regularly engage with the public, government officials, growers and other industries to provide research and management updates.

While studies are ongoing, Roush emphasized that it is going to take a village comprised of scientists, government and regulatory officials, businesses and citizens to make a difference in the spotted lanternfly fight.

"Penn State is using research-based results to broaden the toolkit available to each of these stakeholder groups so they can make informed management decisions across the spotted lanternfly life cycle," he said. "Our team has educated millions through multiple channels from workshops and trainings to online resources and continues to provide the newest and best research-based advice. With everyone working together, we can slow the spread of this destructive pest."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) takes its responsibility to manage spotted lanternfly seriously. Not only supplying major funding to partners, but also establishing a presence in Pennsylvania with field offices and staff devoted solely to spotted lanternfly. USDA and PDA staff work as one to detect and treat spotted lanternfly populations, raise public awareness, follow-up on public reports, and promote the PDA's regulatory permit program for businesses operating within and through quarantined counties. In addition, USDA works with officials from other states, to slow the spread of the spotted lanternfly regionally and nationally and supports research to learn more about this bug and how to control it safely and effectively.

As a result of its ability to damage trees, vines, crops, and plants, the spotted lanternfly is an immediate threat to Pennsylvania's $132.5 billion agriculture industry. A 2019 economic impact study estimates that, uncontrolled, the spotted lanternfly could cost Pennsylvania up to $324

million annually and 2,800 jobs. In addition to economic threat, the spotted lanternfly threatens quality of life for millions of Pennsylvanians by making outdoor living conditions in areas heavily populated by spotted lanternfly a sticky situation.

When a spotted lanternfly feeds, it excretes a sugary substance called honeydew. Honeydew encourages the growth of black sooty mold which causes damage to plants and attracts stinging insects. The sticky substance is known to coat decks and outdoor furniture, play equipment and vehicles.

Quick, aggressive treatment to newly identified populations of Spotted Lanternfly in Pennsylvania has been funded through the Rapid Response Disaster Readiness line of Governor Wolf's Pennsylvania Farm Bill for the past two years. The 2021-22 PA Farm Bill proposes another $3 million to combat Spotted Lanternfly.

For more information on Spotted Lanternfly, visit agriculture.pa.gov/spottedlanternfly. For more about Governor Tom Wolf's PA Farm Bill and its investments in a sustainable agriculture industry visit agriculture.pa.gov/pafarmbill.

Note: Photo and video from today's event available at PAcast.com.

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