

Asian Longhorned Beetle Alert



The Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) is a woodboring insect that attacks a wide range of hardwoods including all species of maple, birch, elm, poplar and willow (www.maine.gov/alb). Damage by the beetle would impact the health of our forests, appearance of our neighborhoods and integrity of our infrastructure. In addition, it would lead to losses in the forest products, maple sugaring and tourism industries and require a costly control effort.

A large ALB infestation was detected in Worcester, Massachusetts in August of 2008. As with all North American ALB infestations, it was initially found by an everyday citizen—Donna Massie was the first to question the presence of ALB in Worcester. She wasn't the first to notice ALB. A pest control operator had one unidentified in his collection for 11 years and ALB were clogging pool filters in Worcester daily for several summers before Donna asked and answered the "Where did these things come from?" question and reported their presence to the Department of Agriculture. In her words "*...the biggest question that will probably never be answered is how this beetle went unnoticed for all these years. When I first spotted this beetle I knew something didn't seem right, I had never seen anything like it before...It really is a shame that it was allowed to go this far.*" Her take home message to others is "if you've never seen it before it may not belong in the United States." Be like Donna, question what you see and if you can't find the answer, ask someone who might be able to help.

A big concern for the MFS is that over the years that this beetle went undetected in Worcester, there were thousands of opportunities for its introduction into Maine on infested roundwood products, especially recreational firewood. We urge you to keep your eyes open for these beetles. Even though they have not yet been found in Maine, it is probable that some have been brought in. We hope that any that were brought in were burned before they emerged or died before mating, but we need to be vigilant.

We have received many questions about wood chips from Massachusetts's ALB regulated area coming to Maine. Interstate movement of this material is regulated by the USDA-Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service. They have determined that chipped material meeting a minimum size requirement is safe and material meeting that size restriction is not regulated: (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/asian_lhb/index.shtml). However, we have some concerns about movement of adults attracted to fresh host material.

The businesses in Maine who were approached about buying this material contacted us before agreeing to receive it. We have worked with them to assure that chips from Worcester were received and handled before the free-living period so as to minimize possibility of "hitch-hiking" beetles. Although trees will continue to be processed in Worcester this summer (the adult active period), to minimize any incidental risk, Maine business who had been buying chips from the Worcester area have pledged to suspend receipt until late fall when ALB are no longer active.

Please join them in helping to protect Maine's forest health:

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of invasive forest pests,
- Ask questions when you see an unfamiliar damage in your forests and neighborhood trees,
- Don't move firewood long distances—you may move hidden invasive pests within and on that wood (www.maine.gov/firewood).