

Spotted lanternfly quarantine area expanded as pest spreads

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The invasive spotted lanternfly, which wreaks havoc on fruit trees and other crops, has expanded its reach to Clarke and Warren counties. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Plant Industry Services announced Feb. 9 that, despite a quarantine, the insect has spread beyond Winchester and Frederick County. In an effort to slow the movement of this pest, VDACS will expand the quarantine in mid-March to include Clarke and Warren counties.

The spotted lanternfly lays eggs on items like plants, lumber, firewood, construction materials, equipment and vehicles.

“This species can have a massive impact on crops and farms in the quarantine area,” said Ben Rowe, national affairs coordinator for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. “From a production standpoint, the spotted lanternfly can devastate vineyard, orchard, tree crops and more. Trucks, shipping containers, agricultural haulers and other vehicles traveling in and out of that zone will need to be permitted, inspected and possibly treated or washed. However, it is critical that the spread of this species is controlled before it expands further into the commonwealth.”

First seen in Virginia in 2018, the spotted lanternfly is a threat to 70 ornamental plants, trees and crops, including apples, grapes, hops and stone fruits.

Businesses located in Clarke, Frederick and Warren counties and the city of Winchester that are shipping regulated articles outside of the quarantine area must obtain a Spotted Lanternfly Permit. Among the regulated articles are construction materials, firewood, grills, outdoor furniture covers, lawn mowers, lumber, nursery stock, shipping containers, tarps, tile and stone.

To acquire a permit, business operators must complete an online training course before applying. There is a \$6 training fee per person, but no fee for the permit, which is recognized by other states.

VDACS will host two virtual meetings to provide more information on the spotted lanternfly and obtaining a permit. The meetings will be held via Webex from 9-10 a.m. on Feb. 22, and from 2-3 p.m. on Feb. 23.