

New plant pest confirmed in Delaware

DOVER – A new nuisance plant pest that can consume certain row and vegetable crops – including lima beans and soybeans – has been confirmed in Delaware.

The kudzu bug was recently found on pole lima beans on a Sussex County farm, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has reported.

Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Ed Kee said growers should be on the alert and report any suspected infestations, while noting there are pesticides that can be used to protect crops.

"We want farmers to know about this latest pest, which has been steadily on the move from the South since it was first detected in 2009," Kee said. "We now have an early warning, and this is the time to prepare."

In addition to soybeans, which are primarily used for animal feed in Delaware, the kudzu bug can also go after succulent beans, such as lima beans, broad beans, mung beans and common garden beans.

The kudzu bug, a relative of the stinkbug also known as *Megacopta cribraria* or the Bean plataspid, was previously confirmed only as far north as Virginia. It has also been found in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. Soybean growers in the South have reported that nymphs and adults feed on plant stems and leaves. A 2012 survey by the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension found no kudzu bug in the state.

"We know that these pests have been traveling, and now we know that they're in Delaware," said Dr. Faith Kuehn, DDA's Plant Industries Administrator. "There are approved and safe treatments to keep the kudzu bug off crops, but preparation and awareness are key. This is still a relatively new plant pest in the United States, and we are steadily learning more about how it will feed, disperse and act here."

The insect's presence in Delaware was identified and confirmed thanks to a rapid response involving an agricultural consultant, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension researchers, the Delaware Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Quarantine office in Beltsville, Md.

The kudzu bug is so named because a primary host is the kudzu vine, an invasive plant introduced from Asia more than a century ago that has been growing quickly in much of the southeastern United States. The olive-green adult bugs are smaller than a dime, about 4-6 mm long, and can generate a bad odor if disturbed.

Farmers with questions about the kudzu bug can contact the Department of Agriculture's Plant Industries Section at (302) 698-4500; University of Delaware entomologist Joanne Whalen at (302) 831-1303; or local University of Delaware Cooperative Extension agents.

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