



Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
CHARLES H. BRONSON, Commissioner

Please Respond to:
Division of Plant Industry
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August 4, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Nurseries, Stock Dealers & Plant Brokers
FROM: Richard Gaskalla, Director
SUBJECT: **Pink Hibiscus Mealybug Advisory**

As you are aware, the first report of pink hibiscus mealybug (PHM) in the State of Florida occurred on June 14, 2002. Since that time, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture, and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, have been cooperating to prevent the spread of this pest through regulatory and biological control efforts.

Unfortunately, while the biological control program is taking effect, PHM has continued to spread into other parts of the state and is becoming a potential regulatory problem for those nurseries, stock dealers and plant brokers that ship nursery stock interstate and to foreign countries. In fact, just last week, there was a shipment of hibiscus plants to Louisiana found to be infested with live PHM. Subsequently, the plants have been destroyed.

It is expected that the biological controls will over time reduce the populations of PHM to a low level. However, in the interim to protect Florida Agriculture and the Florida nursery industry's important domestic and international markets, we are strongly advising you to adhere to the following:

- Ensure your employees are aware of this plant pest and understand the consequences (rejections and/or quarantines) should this pest be detected in your shipments or establishment. For additional information on PHM please visit our website at: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/>
- Maintain a good pest control program using chemical treatments including a systemic insecticide for PHM as recommended by your local County Extension office. Please see above website for additional treatment information.
- Purchase hibiscus and other high risk host plants from registered and certified sources and thoroughly inspect them prior to exposing other parts of your facility to similar or other plants.
- Continually inspect the environment of your establishment for PHM. If detected, contact your local DPI inspector to ensure parasites are or have been released into the infested area.

Please know your efforts and cooperation in helping us prevent the spread of this pest is sincerely appreciated. If there is any additional information you need from us, please contact your local DPI office.

RDG/rc

cc: Mr. Craig Meyer, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture
Mr. Ben Bolusky, Executive Vice President, FNGLA
Mr. Mike Shannon, State Plant Health Director, USDA
Plant Inspectors and Supervisors