

DUTIES

Serves as a Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer with responsibility for performing specialized and difficult identification work specializing in plant pathology.

1. Identifies or verifies identification of plant pests, such as plant pathogens (i.e., bacteria, fungus) and identifies and isolates nematodes; identifies specimens to genera and, where sufficient information is available, to species.
2. Categorizes potential pest as injurious and of economic significance; cosmopolitan and domestic; or not significant or cosmopolitan and domestic but significant in particular parts of the United States.
3. Maintains, develops, and supplements information on taxonomy of pest interceptions and their hosts and distribution or other related information; develops and maintains specimen collections of plant pathogens.
4. Recommends or confirms quarantine actions such as prohibit or restrict entry with specific treatment or release without treatment. As required, administers or oversees administration of treatments.
5. On particularly unusual interceptions or where virtually no pertinent reference material is available, refers pest to expert at other locations, e.g., Smithsonian Institution and National Museum.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position Level 1-7, 1250 pts.

Knowledge of biological and agricultural sciences, principles, and concepts sufficient to perform the full range of duties connected with complex taxonomic identification and treatment work.

In-depth knowledge of the techniques associated with taxonomic plant pathology sufficient to serve as the resident consultant in identification of a wide range of plant pathogens.

Thorough knowledge of quarantine programs, regulations, and treatment methods sufficient to effectively recommend adaptive techniques for situations not covered by precedent.

It is mandatory that the incumbent of this position be certified according to the USDA pesticide applicator certification program within the prescribed time established previously.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls Level 2-4, 450 pts.

The supervisor assigns the officer responsibility for the specialized pathological work and advises on overall objectives and resources available. The officer consults with the supervisor if there are problems such as conflicting priorities of two or three complex emergency identification requests.

The officer has a continuing responsibility in this area of work and is more-or-less self-directed in the daily operation. The officer, having developed expertise in the specialty area, resolves most technical problems which arise, coordinates work with others, as necessary, and interprets Plant Protection and Quarantine program policy on own initiative in terms of established objectives.

Completed work is accepted as technically sound and review is from overall standpoint of effectiveness of services rendered (e.g., backlog of work, complaints, rate of successful identification or rate of referral to other specialists, or other more appropriate measures). As a general rule, due to the lack of in-depth knowledge of taxonomic plant pathology on the part of the supervisor of this position, the supervisory review tends to be administrative in nature rather than technical.

Factor 3, Guidelines Level 3-3, 275 pts.

The officer has available guidelines such as technical references methodology manuals and texts, specimen collections, and Agency manuals. Guidelines are often not directly applicable due to the complexity of the specimens forwarded for identification and the concomitant lack of a directly applicable database.

The officer uses initiative and resourcefulness and draws on personal experience and education in the specialty area to select and apply appropriate scientific techniques to identify and classify specimens. Where necessary, the specialist extrapolates or otherwise deviates from established identification and classification methodology to arrive at conclusions on difficult (to identify) specimens.

Factor 4, Complexity Level 4-4, 225 pts.

Performs the full range of analyses on a wide variety of plant pests including the very difficult, complex and unusual "finds" submitted by Plant Protection and Quarantine personnel.

Typically, the work includes complexities such as unusual analytical requirements and lack of specific and available scientific literature concerning the genera or species of pest. These complications generally lead to uncertainty as to the most promising direction to take to successfully identify the pest.

The officer identifies or verifies the pests and recommends quarantine action on problems requiring originality in approach and modification of techniques (1) when the "find" is an immature, little known, or unknown pest or form of pest; (2) it is a form that closely resembles a harmless type; or (3) there is considerable risk that the treatment for the pest might be injurious to the particular plants or cargo and a different approach is required.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect Level 5-3, 150 pts.

The purpose of the work is to provide expertise in a particular specialty area through the analysis and identification of exotic and potentially destructive plant pests and to recommend specific quarantine actions.

The proper disposition of imported plants and related agricultural products suspected of being infested with economically significant plant pests depends upon the identity of the suspect organism. The work assigned the position, therefore, affects the operation of field activities in terms of effectiveness and acceptability of quarantine service performed as well as the ultimate marketability and health of agricultural resources.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts Level 6-2, 25 pts.

Typically, the contacts are with other employees of the Department and with other specialists in places such as the Mycology Laboratory and universities. Occasionally, contacts are with shippers, importers, exporters, etc., usually at the employee's work place.

Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts Level 7-2, 50 pts.

The purpose is to provide advice and assistance, report on status or results of work, recommend quarantine action, and to solve operational problems to obtain technical assistance from a specialist.

Factor 8, Physical Requirements Level 8-1, 5 pts.

The work is generally sedentary and performed in a laboratory setting or inspection station.

Factor 9, Work Environment Level 9-2, 20 pts.

The work involves regular and recurring risks such as working around and with chemicals. The officer may be required to wear protective clothing or gear (or at least to have them immediately available, if needed).

TOTAL POINTS 2450