

 **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO RESTRICTIONS ON FRUIT SHIPMENTS FROM AREAS QUARANTINED FOR CITRUS CANKER DISEASE

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2009--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced that it is proposing amendments to its citrus canker regulations to allow fruit from quarantined areas to be shipped to all U.S. states, based on new scientific research.

Two new publications, including one from USDA, have provided new information on citrus canker. APHIS' analysis of the new research concludes that the disease is highly unlikely to be spread by harvested fruit without citrus canker symptoms. Even harvested fruit with visible citrus canker symptoms was shown in the research not to spread the disease as long as the fruit is disinfected at the packinghouse using approved methods.

As a result of these findings, APHIS is proposing to amend its current citrus canker regulations. Under the proposal, each lot of harvested fruit will no longer need to be inspected at the packinghouse and found to be free of visible symptoms of citrus canker. Fruit will also no longer be prohibited from being shipped to commercial citrus-producing states. However, APHIS will continue to require fruit moved interstate from a quarantined area to be treated with an approved disinfectant and to be packed in a commercial packinghouse that operates under a compliance agreement.

This proposed action will be published in the June 30 *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before Aug. 31. You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to

<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2009-0023> to submit or view comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically.

Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Please send two copies of your comment to Docket No. APHIS-2009-0023, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS-2009-0023.

Citrus canker is a plant disease caused by a bacterium that affects citrus plants and plant parts--including fresh fruit. Citrus canker can cause defoliation and other serious damage to the leaves and twigs of susceptible plants. It can also cause lesions on the fruit of infected plants and

cause infected fruit to drop from the trees before reaching maturity. In the United States, the disease is only known to be present in Florida.

APHIS works closely with all states to protect the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources. APHIS has a broad mission area that includes improving agricultural productivity and competitiveness, regulating genetically engineered organisms, conducting wildlife management activities, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and managing outbreaks of animal and plant pests and diseases.

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