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BOARD OF AGRICULTURE RESTRICTS MOVEMENT OF OHIA PLANTS FROM HAWAII ISLAND

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Deadly Disease Threatens Hawaii's Native Forests

HONOLULU — The Hawaii Board of Agriculture today approved an interim rule that imposes a quarantine on the intrastate movement of ohia plants and plant parts, including flowers, leaves, seeds, stems, twigs, cuttings, untreated wood, logs, mulch greenwaste and frass (sawdust from boring beetles) from the Island of Hawaii. Transport of such items may be only conducted with a permit issued by the Hawaii Department of Agriculture. The interim rule will go into effect when it is published in the newspapers within 12 days and will be in force for one year.

The reason for the emergency quarantine measure is the ohia wilt, also known as rapid ohia death, a deadly fungus that is attacking ohia trees in East Hawaii Island. Ohia wilt was first noticed in 2010 in Puna. In 2014, the fungus was identified as *Ceratocystis fimbriata* by researchers at the U.S Department of Agriculture's Daniel K. Inouye Agricultural Research Service. In 2014, it was estimated that the disease covered approximately 6,000 acres from Kalapana to Hilo and exhibited tree mortality rates of more than 50 percent. Currently, it is estimated to infest about 15,000 acres. So far, the disease has not been found on other islands. It is not known how the disease entered the state or where it came from.

"We don't have all the answers about how the disease is transmitted," said Scott Enright, Chairperson of the Hawaii Board of Agriculture. "However, the urgency to stop its spread is very clear. Ohia makes up 50 percent of our native forests and watershed – resources that we just cannot risk losing."

It is suspected that the fungus enters the plants through wounds. It causes the crowns of the ohia to turn yellow and brown within days to weeks followed by the death of the tree. The fungus also causes dark, nearly black, staining in the sapwood along the outer margins of

the trunks.

The interim rule will also restrict the movement of soil from Hawaii Island beginning in January 2016. Island nurseries were concerned that a restriction on soil from Hawaii Island would hurt agricultural businesses. Although the spores of the disease was found in soil, the delay was imposed to further research whether soil is able to transmit the disease and to develop testing protocols and treatment options for soil.

Any person who violates the rule may be charged with a misdemeanor and fined not less than \$100. The maximum fine is \$10,000. For a second offense committed within five years of a prior conviction under this rule, the person or organization shall be fined not less than \$500 and not more than \$25,000.

Interim rules are valid for only one year and are meant to address emergency situations, which gives the department time to develop more permanent rules.

More information on ohia wilt may be found at:

HDOA website: <http://hdoa.hawaii.gov/blog/main/reportingohiawilt/>
(<http://hdoa.hawaii.gov/blog/main/reportingohiawilt/>)

University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources website:
http://www2.ctahr.hawaii.edu/forestry/disease/ohia_wilt.html
(http://www2.ctahr.hawaii.edu/forestry/disease/ohia_wilt.html)

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