



State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

Department of Agriculture and Food

LOGAN WILDE
Commissioner

KELLY PEHRSON
Deputy Commissioner

For Immediate Release

Contact: Caroline Hargraves
carolinehargraves@utah.gov
(801)982-2353

December 4, 2020

UDAF Urges Consumers to Monitor Christmas Trees for Invasive Species and Consider Local Options

Salt Lake City, UT — As many families bring fresh Christmas trees into their homes this time of year, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) would like to issue a reminder to watch for evidence of invasive species, particularly indicators of the gypsy moth and pine shoot beetle. Though there are a number of fresh tree lots throughout Utah, the majority of those trees are brought in from out of state. Whenever trees, firewood, or greenery are transported, there's a risk for the transportation of pests. While many insects are beneficial, those on UDAF's invasive species watch list are not.

Invasive species are known to cause between 50-80% of agriculture crop losses per year and the impact on urban forests can be devastating. "Most people don't think about pathways for invasive species. They see a beautiful Christmas tree or piece of wood furniture and don't realize it could be a carrier for an unwelcome insect," said Kristopher Watson, UDAF Insect Program Manager and State Entomologist. UDAF has published a list of current insect quarantines and other helpful information from the Insect and Pest Program [here](#).

UDAF would like to emphasize the importance of purchasing trees from reputable sources who work with our team of inspectors and comply with regulations and quarantines designed to stop the spread of invasive pests. Managing insects is essential to the Department's mission to promote the healthy growth of Utah agriculture, conserve our natural resources and protect our food supply. According to Watson, only one gypsy moth has been found in Utah in the last few years, and no pine shoot beetles have been detected, which he credits to public awareness and UDAF's regulatory responsiveness. "Our method for regulating invasive species is strict enforcement of a robust inspection program," said Watson. "That means working with vendors to create an environment where everyone wins so we can maintain the social, environmental and economic integrity of our state's overall agricultural wellness."

As with many agricultural products and commodities, UDAF reminds consumers to look for local options. Utah State University has a helpful page with Utah-grown Christmas tree farms and vendors along with information on cut-your-own tree permits from land management agencies found [here](#). For those considering cutting and bringing home a wild tree, helpful information from the U.S. Forest Service can be found [here](#).

As always, UDAF is here to help. If you discover an insect and have concerns it may be invasive, please contact us at agriculture@utah.gov. For more information, visit ag.utah.gov.

###