
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that *Oryctes rhinoceros*,
2 or the coconut rhinoceros beetle, can have devastating impacts
3 on palm species that are foundational to the State's
4 agricultural economy, cultural heritage, and ecosystems. Native
5 to Southeast Asia, adult coconut rhinoceros beetles feed on
6 emerging palm fronds, causing damage that can often be severe
7 enough to kill the plant. The coconut rhinoceros beetle was
8 first detected in the State in 2013 and is now established on
9 Oahu, with smaller infestations on the windward side of Kauai,
10 Waikoloa village on Hawaii island, and other parts of the State.

11 The legislature further finds that the coconut rhinoceros
12 beetle response program is a coordinated partnership among the
13 university of Hawaii, United States Department of Agriculture,
14 Hawaii department of agriculture, and other key organizations.
15 At the university of Hawaii at Manoa lab, the program
16 investigates new control methods and best practices; a data team
17 analyzes information from traps, mulch surveys, and tree damage;



1 and an outreach team provides information to the public and
2 professionals while supporting community response efforts.
3 While the expertise and methodology developed were not available
4 at the start of the infestation on Oahu, they can now be
5 deployed to prevent infestations on islands that are not yet
6 infested. For infested areas, the program currently educates
7 arborists and tree trimmers to protect trees with contact
8 pesticides.

9 Additionally, the program is working on a long-term
10 solution through biocontrol, which has been found to be
11 effective in other parts of the world. The program is also
12 working on bringing in agents and hosting range studies in early
13 2026. Researchers have a rearing colony of coconut rhinoceros
14 beetles at the university and need to test whether the viral
15 strains that kill the beetles affect any native species. Once
16 an appropriate strain is identified, it could be released on
17 infected beetles to spread and suppress the population in the
18 wild.

19 The legislature also finds that emergency response funding
20 from the United States Department of Agriculture is ending, as
21 it is no longer considered an emergency after more than ten



1 years. Stable year-to-year funding to the university of Hawaii
2 to support key positions within the core coconut rhinoceros
3 beetle response program would assist in leveraging additional
4 federal funds.

5 The legislature declares that the management of coconut
6 rhinoceros beetles is a matter of statewide concern.

7 The purpose of this Act is to:

8 (1) Establish short-term management initiatives for the
9 coconut rhinoceros beetle response program; and

10 (2) Appropriate funds to support the coconut rhinoceros
11 beetle response program's activities and positions.

12 SECTION 2. In its coconut rhinoceros beetle response, the
13 university of Hawaii shall incorporate the following short-term
14 management initiatives:

15 (1) Engaging with tree trimmers, arborists, and the
16 landscaping industry to educate them on the current
17 best management practices and combat the
18 misinformation circulating about coconut rhinoceros
19 beetle treatment options; provided that annual
20 workshops shall be held on each island; provided



1 further that a list of companies that receive the
2 training shall be posted online for use by consumers;

3 (2) Subsidizing canopy treatments for residential palm
4 owners;

5 (3) Extending services by the coconut rhinoceros beetle
6 response program to Hawaii island and the islands of
7 Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Lanai when coconut
8 rhinoceros beetles are detected;

9 (4) Performing canine inspections, in coordination with
10 the department of agriculture, on high-risk cargo
11 moving between islands; and

12 (5) Conducting research with an emphasis on biocontrol.

13 SECTION 3. Applications for grants subsidizing canopy
14 treatment for residential palm owners pursuant to section 2(2)
15 of this Act shall be made to the university of Hawaii. At a
16 minimum, the applicant shall:

17 (1) Be licensed or accredited, in accordance with federal,
18 state, or county statutes, rules, or ordinances, to
19 conduct the activities or provide the services for
20 which a grant is awarded;



- 1 (2) Provide a detailed plan outlining the scope,
2 objectives, and projected impact of the project or
3 projects and a clear breakdown of how grant funds will
4 be utilized;
- 5 (3) Agree to use state funds exclusively for canopy
6 treatment;
- 7 (4) Indicate capability to properly use the grant for
8 canopy treatment;
- 9 (5) Agree not to use state funds for purposes of
10 entertainment or perquisites;
- 11 (6) Agree to make available to the university of Hawaii
12 all records the applicant may have relating to the
13 grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the
14 applicant's compliance with this section;
- 15 (7) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State and its
16 officers, agents, and employees from and against any
17 and all claims arising out of or resulting from
18 activities carried out or projects undertaken with
19 funds provided hereunder and procure sufficient
20 insurance to provide this indemnification if requested
21 to do so by the university of Hawaii;



1 (8) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county
2 statutes, rules, and ordinances;

3 (9) Comply with other requirements as the university of
4 Hawaii may prescribe; and

5 (10) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws
6 prohibiting discrimination against any person on the
7 basis of race, color, national origin, religion,
8 creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or
9 any other characteristic protected under applicable
10 federal or state law.

11 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
13 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
14 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
15 year 2026-2027 to be allocated as follows:

16 (1) \$ for training tree trimmers, arborists, and
17 the landscaping industry on the current best
18 management practices about coconut rhinoceros beetles;

19 (2) \$ for subsidizing canopy treatments for
20 residential palm owners;



(3) \$ for extending deployment of coconut rhinoceros beetle response teams to Hawaii island and the islands of Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Lanai when coconut rhinoceros beetles are detected;

(4) \$ to perform canine inspections, in coordination with the department of agriculture, for coconut rhinoceros beetles for high-risk cargo moving between islands;

(5) \$ for three drones for Hawaii island and the islands of Maui and Kauai; and

(6) \$ for full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent positions for biocontrol research, including technician and graduate student positions.

The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department of agriculture for the purposes of this Act; provided that the department of agriculture contracts with the college of tropical agriculture and human resilience at the university of Hawaii at Manoa.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Department of Agriculture; University of Hawaii; Coconut
Rhinoceros Beetle; Prevention; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut
rhinoceros beetle response program. Appropriates funds for
activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle
infestation control. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD1)

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