
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 throughout 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, and a data
17 team analyzes information from traps, mulch surveys, and tree



1 damage. An outreach team also provides information to the
2 public and professionals while supporting community response
3 efforts. While the expertise and methodology developed were not
4 available at the start of the infestation on Oahu, they can now
5 be 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 permitting to bring in agents and hopes to host range
13 studies in early 2026. Researchers have a rearing colony of
14 coconut rhinoceros beetles at the university and need to test
15 whether the viral strains that kill the beetles affect any
16 native species. Once an appropriate strain is identified, it
17 could be released on infected beetles to spread and suppress the
18 population in the 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 purpose of this Act is to:

- 6 (1) Establish short-term management initiatives for the
7 coconut rhinoceros beetle response program; and
8 (2) Appropriate funds to support the coconut rhinoceros
9 beetle response program's activities and positions.

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

- 13 (1) Engagement with tree trimmers, arborists, and the
14 landscaping industry by educating them on the current
15 best management practices and combating the
16 misinformation circulating about coconut rhinoceros
17 beetle treatment options; provided that annual
18 workshops shall be held on each island; provided
19 further that a list of companies that receive the
20 training shall be posted online for use by consumers;



- 1 (2) Subsidizing canopy treatments for residential palm
- 2 owners;
- 3 (3) Extending services by the coconut rhinoceros beetle
- 4 response program to Hawaii island and the islands of
- 5 Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Lanai when coconut
- 6 rhinoceros beetles are detected;
- 7 (4) Performing canine inspections, in coordination with
- 8 the department of agriculture, on high-risk cargo
- 9 moving between islands; and
- 10 (5) Conducting research with an emphasis on biocontrol.

11 SECTION 3. 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;



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

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

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

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

15 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the university
 16 of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

17 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle; Prevention; University of Hawaii;
Appropriation

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. (HD1)

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