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# 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 Waikaloa 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 was not  
4 available at the start of the infestation on Oahu, it 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 a 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 additionally finds that emergency response  
20 funding from the United States Department of Agriculture is  
21 ending, as the infestation is no longer considered an emergency



1 after more than ten years since initial detection in the State.  
2 Stable year-to-year funding to the university of Hawaii to  
3 support key positions within the core coconut rhinoceros beetle  
4 response program would assist in leveraging additional federal  
5 funds.

6 The legislature also finds that the establishment of short-  
7 term management initiatives in the coconut rhinoceros beetle  
8 response program within the university of Hawaii is a matter of  
9 statewide concern pursuant to article X, section 6, of the  
10 Hawaii State Constitution.

11 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 12 (1) Establish short-term management initiatives for the  
13 coconut rhinoceros beetle response program; and  
14 (2) Appropriate funds to support the coconut rhinoceros  
15 beetle response program's activities and positions.

16 SECTION 2. In its coconut rhinoceros beetle response  
17 program, the university of Hawaii shall incorporate the  
18 following short-term management initiatives:

- 19 (1) Engaging with tree trimmers, arborists, and the  
20 landscaping industry by educating them on the current  
21 best management practices and combating the



1 misinformation circulating about coconut rhinoceros  
2 beetle treatment options; provided that annual  
3 workshops shall be held on each island; provided  
4 further that a list of companies that receive the  
5 training shall be posted online for use by consumers;

6 (2) Subsidizing canopy treatments for residential palm  
7 owners;

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

12 (4) Performing canine inspections, in cooperation with the  
13 department of agriculture, on high-risk cargo moving  
14 between islands;

15 (5) Subsidizing container fumigation of high-risk  
16 materials traveling between islands; and

17 (6) Conducting research with an emphasis on biocontrol.

18 SECTION 3. Applications for grants subsidizing canopy  
19 treatment for residential palm owners and container fumigation  
20 of high-risk materials traveling between islands shall be made  
21 to the university of Hawaii and contain the information as shall



1 be required by rules adopted thereunder. At a minimum, the  
2 applicant shall:

3 (1) Be licensed or accredited, pursuant to federal, state,  
4 or county statutes, rules, or ordinances to conduct  
5 the activities or provide the services for which a  
6 grant is awarded;

7 (2) Provide a detailed planning outline the scope,  
8 objectives, and projected impact of the project or  
9 projects and a clear breakdown of how grant funds  
10 shall be utilized;

11 (3) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes  
12 of these programs;

13 (4) Indicate capability to properly use the grant for the  
14 purpose of these grant programs; provided that the  
15 university of Hawaii shall prescribe the applicant  
16 qualifications for each grant;

17 (5) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws  
18 prohibiting discrimination against any person on the  
19 basis of race, color, national origin, religion,  
20 creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or



1 any other characteristic protected under applicable  
2 federal or state law;

3 (6) Agree to refrain from using state funds for purposes  
4 of entertainment or perquisites;

5 (7) Comply with other requirements as the university of  
6 Hawaii may prescribe;

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

9 (9) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State and its  
10 officers, agents, and employees from and against any  
11 and all claims arising out of or resulting from  
12 activities carried out or projects undertaken with  
13 funds provided hereunder and procure sufficient  
14 insurance to provide this indemnification if requested  
15 to do so by the university of Hawaii; and

16 (10) Agree to make available to the university of Hawaii  
17 all records the applicant may have relating to the  
18 grant to allow state agencies to monitor the  
19 applicant's compliance with this section.

20 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so



1 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
2 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
3 year 2026-2027 to be allocated as follows:

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

7 (2) \$ for subsidizing canopy treatments for  
8 residential palm owners;

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

13 (4) \$ to perform canine inspections for coconut  
14 rhinoceros beetles for high-risk cargo moving between  
15 islands;

16 (5) \$ for subsidizing container fumigation of  
17 high-risk materials traveling between islands; and

18 (6) \$ for full-time equivalent ( FTE)  
19 permanent positions for biocontrol research.

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



**1** SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 31, 2050.





**Report Title:**

UH; Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program; Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle; Prevention; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes short-term management initiatives for the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program. Establishes standards for the usage of grants awarded pursuant to the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Response Program. Appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii for activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation control. Effective 7/31/2050.  
(SD1)

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