
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO BIOSECURITY.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the coconut
2 rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is one of the State's fastest growing
3 invasive threats, capable of causing hundreds of millions of
4 dollars in damage to palms, agriculture, and culturally
5 important landscapes. Although adult CRB visibly damage palm
6 crowns, eighty to ninety per cent of the CRB life cycle occurs
7 hidden inside mulch and green waste piles, where larvae develop
8 undetected for four to six months before emerging as new adults.
9 These piles, not the palms, are the true drivers of population
10 growth.

11 Increasing CRB populations bring significant economic and
12 budgetary risks for the State. CRB-related economic losses are
13 estimated to reach \$500 million to \$1 billion over the next
14 decade, with agricultural impacts alone projected at \$169
15 million annually by 2040 if spread reaches additional islands
16 and agricultural regions. However, these figures do not capture
17 indirect cultural, environmental, or tourism-related impacts



1 associated with the loss of mature palms and native species, but
2 illustrate that CRB management is not only an ecological issue,
3 but also a significant fiscal consideration.

4 The legislature also finds that beyond financial costs, CRB
5 threatens coastal resilience, traditional practices, community
6 aesthetics, and the State's tourism economy. Despite these
7 risks, Hawaii currently lacks consistent, statewide standards
8 for how mulch and green waste are stored, treated, processed, or
9 moved, leaving large breeding sites unmanaged in both
10 residential areas and high-volume commercial operations.
11 Existing movement rules reduce the spread between districts but
12 do nothing to reduce CRB populations where they are already
13 established.

14 The legislature further finds that while coconut palms are
15 the primary host, other culturally and agriculturally important
16 affected plants include date palms, hala, banana, sugarcane, and
17 kalo. Because CRB spend most of their lives (four to six
18 months) inside decomposing plant material, breeding sites are
19 the foundation of local population growth. Adult activity in
20 palm crowns represents only a small fraction of the total life
21 cycle.



1 Current CRB management tools generally include some
2 combination of palm protection, breeding-site reduction, and
3 movement controls. Palm-focused treatment include trunk and
4 root injections of systemic insecticides that can protect palms
5 for several months, and crown sprays and fungicide treatments
6 via drone application help maintain palm vigor and reduce
7 secondary decline. These approaches protect individual trees
8 but do not address the source of new CRB. Breeding-site
9 management of mulch and green waste includes heat-based or
10 mechanical "kill treatments" such as thermophilic composting,
11 pile turning or processing that reliably generates lethal core
12 temperatures, steam treatments, or other high-heat methods; and
13 other strategies that can be effective, low-cost management
14 option for smaller piles. Because larvae require several months
15 to develop, treating green waste at least every four months
16 interrupts the life cycle before adult emergence.

17 The legislature also finds that certain existing
18 regulations in the State do restrict the movement of certain
19 high-risk plant materials. However, these regulations apply
20 only to specific species or pathways and do not comprehensively
21 regulate the movement of untreated green waste or mulch. As a



1 result, current movement controls operate as a loose, patchwork
2 system, which reduces some pest-spread risk but leave
3 significant gaps that allow untreated mulch and green waste to
4 move between infested and non-infested areas, including inter-
5 island transport.

6 The legislature also finds that because more than ninety
7 per cent of the CRB life cycle occurs inside undisturbed mulch
8 and green waste piles, establishing consistent, enforceable,
9 science-based standards for residential and commercial mulch and
10 green waste handling provides an opportunity to reduce CRB
11 populations significantly and effectively at their source.

12 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish
13 mandatory, enforceable standards for the handling, storage,
14 treatment, and movement of mulch and green waste materials in
15 coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zones, both residential and
16 commercial, to ensure early intervention at CRB breeding sites,
17 reduce CRB reinfestation risk, and support statewide biosecurity
18 resilience.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 150A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
20 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
21 and to read as follows:



1 "§150A- Residential and commercial mulch and green waste
2 materials; coconut rhinoceros beetle; mandatory handling and
3 treatment standards. (a) All contractors, commercial
4 operators, counties, and facilities that generate, store,
5 transport, sell, or distribute mulch or green waste shall be
6 required to neutralize coconut rhinoceros beetle host material
7 using one of the following two methods:

8 (1) Mechanical turning and spreading;

9 (A) Piles shall be fully turned, aerated, and broken
10 down not less than once every sixty calendar
11 days; and

12 (B) Material shall be spread or reworked in a manner
13 that prevents long-term cool core development; or

14 (2) Verified heat treatment with documented treatment
15 readings and dates to be retained for inspection;

16 (A) Material shall be subjected to thermophilic
17 composting steam treatment; or

18 (B) Any equivalent heat-based kill treatment capable
19 of achieving:

20 (i) A minimum internal temperature of one
21 hundred thirty-one degrees Fahrenheit or



1 fifty-five degrees Celsius for not less than
2 three consecutive days; or
3 (ii) A scientifically validated equivalent lethal
4 exposure approved by the department.

5 (b) No residential property owner or occupant shall
6 create, maintain, store, or accumulate a mulch pile, green waste
7 pile, or compost pile larger than one cubic yard, or any other
8 coconut rhinoceros beetle host material capable of supporting
9 larval development. All green waste generated at a residence
10 shall be placed into county-issued green waste bins for
11 scheduled collection or transported to an approved commercial
12 processor, county facility, or transfer station. Prohibited
13 materials include:

- 14 (1) Loose mulch;
- 15 (2) Green waste;
- 16 (3) Palm debris;
- 17 (4) Coconut husk material;
- 18 (5) Uncontained or unprocessed vegetative waste; or
- 19 (6) Any decomposing organic matter than meets the
20 definition of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material.



1 (c) No untreated green waste, mulch, compost, palm debris,
2 or other coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall be sold,
3 distributed, transferred, or commercially exchanged within or
4 from a coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zone unless:

5 (1) The material has undergone documented mechanical
6 turning or certified heat treatment pursuant to
7 subsection (a); and

8 (2) There is documented proof of treatment that
9 accompanies the material at the point of sale,
10 transfer, or distribution. Any sale, transfer, or
11 distribution of untreated material shall constitute an
12 immediate violation subject to enforcement action.

13 (d) All coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall be
14 treated before any:

15 (1) Transfer between property;

16 (2) Commercial sale or resale;

17 (3) Distribution by county or private facilities; or

18 (4) Off-site hauling for disposal and composting; provided
19 that redundant treatment upon receipt may be required
20 when transporting material between separate operators.



1 (e) Any untreated coconut rhinoceros beetle host material
2 shall not be stored for more than sixty days in any coconut
3 rhinoceros beetle infested zone under any circumstances. After
4 sixty days, the coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall be
5 treated immediately or removed for approved treatment or
6 disposal pursuant to this section.

7 (f) The following shall be exempt from this section:

8 (1) Any island of the State without a confirmed coconut
9 rhinoceros beetle population; and

10 (2) Small-scale residential composting contained in sealed
11 or pest-proof bins not more than one cubic yard.

12 (g) The department shall enforce and administer the
13 provisions of this section. Any commercial operator or
14 residential property owner violating any provisions of this
15 section shall:

16 (1) Receive a written warning and be required to take
17 corrective action within seven days;

18 (2) Be subject to a civil fine of \$500 and be required to
19 take corrective action within seven days if:

20 (A) Corrective action was not taken after receiving a
21 written warning; or



1 (B) A second violation occurs; and

2 (3) Be subject to a civil fine of \$1,000 for any
3 subsequent offense; provided that each day of
4 continued violation under this section shall
5 constitute a distinct and separate offense.

6 The chairperson of the board may institute a civil action in any
7 court of competent jurisdiction for injunctive or other relief
8 to correct or abate violations of this section or any rule
9 adopted pursuant to this section, to collect administrative
10 penalties, or to obtain other relief. Collected civil fines
11 shall be retained by the department as additional funding to
12 support ongoing coconut rhinoceros beetle management efforts,
13 including implementation, enforcement, technical assistance, and
14 outreach, and community grants and cost-share programs for
15 equipment to support compliance.

16 (h) There is established within the department a statewide
17 coconut rhinoceros beetle compliance hotline and reporting
18 system to allow residents, landscapers, contractors, and
19 agricultural workers to report suspected untreated piles,
20 illegal sales, and long-term storage violations. The hotline
21 and reporting system shall include an email and phone number.



1 (i) For the purposes of this section:

2 "Coconut rhinoceros beetle host material" means green
3 waste, mulch, compost, palm debris, coconut husk, decomposing
4 plant matter, or any organic material capable of supporting the
5 development of coconut rhinoceros beetle larvae.

6 "Coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zone" means any
7 geographic area designated by the department as having confirmed
8 coconut rhinoceros beetle presence or elevated risk of
9 establishment.

10 "Documentation" means written or electronic records of
11 treatment methods, temperatures achieved, dates of processing,
12 and verification logs required under this section.

13 "Green waste" means leaves, branches, fronds, grass
14 clippings, chipped vegetation, palm residues, and other plant
15 material generated through landscaping, trimming, or land-
16 clearing activities.

17 "Mulch" means mechanically processed or unprocessed plant
18 material used or stored for landscaping, soil amendment, or
19 compost feedstock.

20 "Operator" means any individual, business, contractor,
21 county, green waste processor, composting facility, or landowner



1 responsible for generating, storing, moving, or processing
2 coconut rhinoceros beetle host material.

3 "Pile" means any accumulation of coconut rhinoceros beetle
4 host material exceeding one cubic yard, whether loose,
5 compacted, or contained.

6 "Processing" means any activity that breaks apart,
7 mixes, turns, aerates, or mechanically alters coconut rhinoceros
8 beetle host material.

9 "Redundant treatment" means treatment applied upon receipt
10 of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material that has already been
11 treated before transfer, as required by the department.

12 "Storage" means the accumulation or placement of coconut
13 rhinoceros beetle host material on a property for more than
14 seventy-two hours.

15 "Thermophilic composting" means a heat-based composting
16 process that achieves sustained elevated temperatures sufficient
17 to kill coconut rhinoceros beetle larvae and pupae.

18 "Transfer" means the sale, exchange, distribution, gifting,
19 or physical relocation of coconut rhinoceros beetle host
20 material from one property or operator to another.



1 "Treatment" means mechanical turning or heat-based
2 processing that meets the standards established in this section,
3 including required temperatures, durations, and documentation.

4 "Untreated material" means coconut rhinoceros beetle host
5 material that has not undergone treatment meeting the
6 temperature, duration, and documentation requirements
7 established under this section."

8 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

9 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Management; Invasive Species; Green Waste; Agriculture; Biosecurity; Penalties

Description:

Beginning 1/1/2027, establishes mandatory handling and storage rules for commercial and residential coconut rhinoceros beetle host material to reduce the spread of CRB within infested zones and to prevent spread into non-infested zones. Establishes penalties. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

