

ACT 137

H.B. NO. 237

A Bill for an Act Relating to Invasive Species.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the two-lined spittlebug, *Prosapia bicincta*, is an invasive insect that attacks key forage grasses used by the livestock ranching industry. In 2016, the State's first two-lined spittlebug infestation was discovered in Kailua-Kona, on the island of Hawaii, where the pest had damaged nearly two thousand acres of pasture land. Many high-quality pasture grasses, including Bracharia, Kikuyu, Pangola, St. Augustine, and Bermuda, are susceptible to *P.bicincta* attacks. During heavy infestations, dying plant tissue cascades from the leaves to the roots, ultimately causing the death of the whole plant. The resulting damage does not allow for any regrowth, requiring ranchers to totally replant affected pastures.

The legislature further finds that two-lined spittlebug infestations have reduced the quality of some forage pastures in Hawaii by decreasing their nutritional value, palatability, and productivity. Infestations of the pest also promote the establishment of weeds and lower-quality foraging grasses. Monthly surveys carried out on the island of Hawaii since 2017 show that the pest is rapidly expanding its range and now covers more than two hundred seventy-five square miles.

The legislature recognizes that livestock ranching is a highly productive and extremely valuable industry on all of Hawaii's major islands. The State's livestock industry has an estimated annual value of more than \$68,000,000, with over one hundred forty-two thousand beef cattle on more than one thousand

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three hundred ranches. Collectively, these ranches cover nearly twenty-five per cent of the State's land area.

The legislature also recognizes that the expanding livestock industry serves as an economic engine for the State and a major employer for local communities. This is particularly true on the island of Hawaii, where nearly sixty per cent of the State's cattle are raised. Additionally, seventy per cent of the beef cattle in Hawaii are raised on sod-forming grasses such as Kikuyu and Pangola. Consequently, two-lined spittlebugs threaten both job and food security in the State, making it crucial to address infestations and to restrict further spread.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to mitigate and control the two-lined spittlebug and to fund recovery efforts.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the funds received by the State of Hawaii from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2 (Section 9901), the sum of \$350,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2021-2022, to be used to mitigate and control the two-lined spittlebug, including reducing the two-lined spittlebug population by using insecticides, integrating weed management measures in affected rangelands, and reseeding pastures damaged by infestations.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 3. The department of agriculture shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations regarding efforts to mitigate and control the two-lined spittlebug and the recovery of pasture lands, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2022. The report shall document the expenditure of funds and the progress of activities funded by this Act.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.

(Approved June 30, 2021.)