

State broadens quarantine on Oahu coffee farms

The heightened restrictions are designed to stop the spread of an invasive beetle

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Waiialua Estate Coffee Farms has been trying since December to meet quarantine requirements imposed by the state in an effort to contain the destructive coffee berry borer, the state Board of Agriculture was told on Tuesday.

"We still have not been able to satisfy the (quarantine) requirements," said the company's sales and operations manager, Derek Lanter. "This is costing us a great deal of opportunity in sales."

Coffee grown at Waiialua Estate Coffee Farms and roasted at the Old Waiialua Sugar Mill was placed under quarantine after federal and state agricultural and Dole Foods officials surveyed two Waiialua coffee fields, which total 155 acres, and found the beetle. The pest had previously been contained to Hawaii island.

The discovery was the first confirmation it had made its way to Oahu.

The board voted unanimously Tuesday to place all Oahu-grown coffee under quarantine restrictions after infestations were discovered at a private Waiialua residence and the nearby University of Hawaii Poamoho Research Station. An official from the Agriculture Department told the Honolulu Star-Advertiser that Waiialua Coffee is the only commercial grower on the island, but the number of smaller private coffee growers affected by the expansion was not immediately available.

"Oahu is a hub for the state's coffee trade, and we need to make sure that coffee beans that are imported to, as well as exported from Oahu, are not spreading this destructive pest," board Chairman Scott Enright said in a statement, explaining that the islandwide quarantine is essential to preventing the beetle dispersion because Oahu is the crossroads for

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HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



COFFEE BERRY BORER BEETLE



COFFEE: Regulations are 'confusing,' Waialua grower says

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intrastate movement of coffee.

So far the coffee berry borer has not been detected on Maui, Kauai, Molokai or Lanai.

Under the quarantine, a permit is required to transport unroasted beans, coffee plants and plant parts, used coffee bags and harvesting equipment from infested islands to uninfested islands. It also requires treatments and state inspections before shipping.

But Lanter said the regulations are too "confusing" and

that quarantine conditions need to be explained better to all stakeholders involved — including Hawaii's Department of Agriculture, coffee growers, roasters, and those who buy the coffee products.

After pouring money into treatment protocols, including fumigation, to control the coffee pest, "we are still unable to ship because the roasters don't know what permits they need and so we're stuck," Lanter said. "Now what?"

In response, the Agriculture Department said it is doing all it can by obtaining registration and licensing for

a fungus pesticide that kills the beetle and funding subsidy programs to make the product more affordable to growers. It has also spent more than \$800,000 in grants to the University of Hawaii, USDA Agricultural Research Service, and local farmers for research into new management options and education programs to help growers control the pest.

Since the pest was detected in 2010, some Hawaii island coffee growers have been able to keep infestations down to about 20 percent of their coffee crop by developing methods such as

using an organic pesticide and field sanitation practices.

Overall, Lanter said he supports the islandwide quarantine expansion but that he hopes to see better communication regarding ways to deal with the new pest.

"I wish to be able to get an answer of how we can go forward and sell our coffee on Oahu and to the neighbor islands and that the roasters be able to get the necessary permits and information they need," Lanter said. "We cannot wait much longer to get back in the game."