United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Program Aid No.1666

Keep the Homefront Pest Free

Gypsy moths defoliate trees and shrubs. Further introductions of this pest could cause widespread damage to plants on both private and commercial land in the United States. APHIS file photos show a gypsy moth caterpillar and an adult male (top right) and female with egg mass (lower right).

Items brought into the United States may harbor foreign animal and plant pests that could seriously damage American crops, livestock, and forests. You are responsible for making sure your household goods don't bring foreign pests home. This leaflet explains how to inspect your household goods before moving to see if they harbor insects, snails, or soil.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is concerned about further introductions of many pests, including gypsy moth and several varieties of snails. These pests can cause immense damage to our natural resources because they have few natural enemies in the United States.

Because foreign soil in any amount could carry pests and animal diseases, objects contaminated with soil cannot come into the country. All military and commercial equipment (e.g., tanks and trucks) must be thoroughly washed before being returned to the United States after overseas use. Likewise, your personal property must also be soil free.

Cover photo and photo credits: Equipment returning to the United States from military action abroad must be carefully inspected to make sure it is free of exotic pests and diseases that could devastate U.S. agriculture. (APHIS file photo taken during Operation Desert Storm. Images not specifically credited in subsequent captions come from APHIS' photo library.)

Do-It-Yourself Inspection

Inspect any household article left outdoors, stored in open or exposed areas, or stored indoors but used outdoors.

The checklist included in this leaflet lists common outdoor household articles that could carry insects, snails, or soil. Carefully examine each article, clean it if necessary, and check it off the list.

Be sure to enter the date and place of inspection on the checklist and sign on the bottom. This will be your official certificate of self-inspection. You must include this list with the paperwork accompanying your move.

The giant African snail (top), white garden snail (middle), and brown garden snail (bottom) are destructive pests that can be found on outdoor household goods. (The photograph of the brown garden snail was taken by Joe Zoltowski of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and is reproduced by permission. The remaining snail shots are APHIS file photographs.)

What To Do If You Find Soil or Insect Pests or Snails

Wash all soil from outdoor household articles and shoes. An effective way to dispose of insects or snails is to remove them by hand and deposit them in hot water, ammonia, household bleach, or kerosene. Scrape egg masses from their locations with a putty knife or similar flat-edged tool.

Pests and dust may cause skin rashes, difficulty in breathing, or other allergic reactions. If necessary, wear gloves, protective clothing, and a dust mask while inspecting and cleaning your outdoor items.

Once you have completed your inspection of the outdoor items you intend to move, protect them from being reinfested.

Remember, you are the key to preventing the spread of pests on outdoor household articles. You may elect to abandon articles if they are heavily infested and of little value to you. Do your part to prevent the spread of these pests and help keep the homefront pest free.

Many kinds of pests, like khapra beetles, could harm U.S. agriculture if accidentally introduced.

Commercial enterprises and the military are responsible for cleaning all their equipment to ensure it is free of soil and pests before it is brought home from abroad. All tanks and trucks are thoroughly inspected before being returned to the United States.

Soil contaminated with organic materials (e.g., manure, meat scraps, or caracsses) can carry animal diseases into the United States. Straw and hay, which are often used for packing materials, can harbor parasites and ticks that can also carry animal diseases. Make sure all soil is removed from household items and packing materials.

If you find gypsy moth or other egg masses, scrape them into a container of hot water, household bleach, ammonia, or kerosene.

Agriculture Self-Inspection Checklist

Important: Make sure this checklist goes with your household goods when you move!

Name: _____
Date: _____
Place Inspected: _____

Recreational or Camping Items

- ☐ Backboards
- ☐ Backpacks
- ☐ Boats
- ☐ Boat trailers
- ☐ Campers
- ☐ Ice chests
- ☐ Motorcycles
- ☐ Snowmobiles
- ☐ Sports equipment
- ☐ Tarps
- ☐ Tents
- ☐ Waders or boots
- ☐ _____

Household Items

- ☐ Air conditioners
- ☐ Barrels
- ☐ Cardboard and wooden boxes
- ☐ Clothesline poles
- ☐ Clothespin bags
- ☐ Empty plant containers
- ☐ Fuel tanks
- ☐ Ladders
- ☐ Outdoor doormats
- ☐ Outdoor thermometers
- ☐ Refrigerators
- ☐ Sheets of plastic
- ☐ Shutters
- ☐ Storage sheds
- ☐ Storm/screen doors and windows
- ☐ Television antennas
- ☐ Trash cans
- ☐ Washing machines
- ☐ Weather vanes
- ☐ Window awnings
- ☐ _____

Building Materials

- ☐ Bricks
- ☐ Cement mixing tubs
- ☐ Lumber
- ☐ Pipes
- ☐ Tools and toolboxes
- ☐ Welding equipment
- ☐ Workbenches
- ☐ _____

Yard and Garden Items

- ☐ Animal houses (doghouses, rabbit hutches, etc.)
- ☐ Barbecue grills
- ☐ Birdbaths
- ☐ Bird feeders
- ☐ Bird houses
- ☐ Bug lights
- ☐ Carts
- ☐ Coldframes
- ☐ Driftwood
- ☐ Fencing
- ☐ Fertilizer
- ☐ Flagpoles
- ☐ Garden tillers
- ☐ Garden tools
- ☐ Lawnmowers
- ☐ Mailboxes
- ☐ Picnic tables
- ☐ Planters
- ☐ Porch or patio furniture
- ☐ Signs and posts
- ☐ Snowblowers
- ☐ Spreaders
- ☐ Storage sheds
- ☐ Swimming pools and swimming pool equipment
- ☐ Water hoses
- ☐ Wheelbarrows
- ☐ Yard decorations
- ☐ _____

Over

Children's Playthings

- ☐ Bicycles
- ☐ Playhouses
- ☐ Sandboxes
- ☐ Sleds, toboggans
- ☐ Swingsets
- ☐ Tire swings
- ☐ Wagons
- ☐ Other outside toys like trucks, sand molds
- ☐ _____

Other Items

- ☐ Cars or trucks
- ☐ Car parts
- ☐ Car ramps
- ☐ Farm items
- ☐ Plant nursery items
- ☐ Stored tires/snow tires
- ☐ Any item not mentioned that was stored outside
- ☐ _____

Signature: _____

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This brochure supersedes Program Aid 1525, "Don't Bring Home a Bug," issued August 1994.