

WSR 24-10-104
PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
[Filed May 1, 2024, 8:58 a.m.]

Subject of Possible Rule Making: Chapter 16-470 WAC, Quarantine—Agricultural pests. The department of agriculture (department) is considering expanding the boundaries of the Japanese beetle internal quarantine. The current permanent internal quarantine specified in chapter 16-470 WAC covers 49 square miles in the southeastern corner of Yakima County and the southwestern corner of Benton County. Japanese beetle catches from the 2022 and 2023 trapping seasons indicate that a permanent expansion of the internal quarantine is necessary to prevent further infestation of this pest in nonquarantined areas. The department is also considering amending the articles regulated under the quarantine, as well as the conditions governing the movement of regulated articles from quarantine areas and requirements around signage.

Statutes Authorizing the Agency to Adopt Rules on this Subject: RCW 17.24.011 and 17.24.041.

Reasons Why Rules on this Subject may be Needed and What They Might Accomplish: Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica* Newman) is a highly invasive plant pest native to Japan. It has been known to cause severe damage to more than 300 species of ornamental and agricultural plants, including roses, grapes, and hops. Adult beetles damage plants by skeletonizing foliage and feeding on buds, flowers, and fruit. The larvae also damage the roots of plants such as turf grass. Although this feeding does not always kill the plant, it weakens it and may reduce the plant's overall yield.

In 2021, the department caught 24,048 Japanese beetles in the current internal quarantine area. Throughout 2021, 2022, and 2023, the department took extensive measures to reduce the spread of the beetle, with an ultimate goal of eradicating it. Measures that have been taken include treating residential and public properties with pesticide, trapping, and establishing an internal quarantine. Despite these efforts, by the end of the 2022 trapping season, numerous Japanese beetles, which indicate a reproducing population, were caught outside of the currently established internal quarantine area. This occurred again in 2023, with beetles being caught even further outside of the internal quarantine area than in 2022. Due to this, immediate action is needed to expand the internal Japanese beetle quarantine to reflect the area of infestation more accurately and strengthen the quarantine's protections. Further, the department believes that adding soil samples as a regulated article, requiring signage be posted for businesses selling certain regulated articles, and clarifying the requirement around cut flowers is necessary to prevent the beetles' further dissemination within this state and to protect the state's forest, agricultural, horticultural, floricultural, beekeeping, and environmental interests.

If Japanese beetle becomes permanently established throughout the state, it could severely threaten several of Washington's agricultural industries. The threat this pest poses is particularly concerning due to the area in which the detections have occurred. There are a number of farms and nurseries in close proximity to the detection sites that are growing plant species known to be targeted by Japanese beetle. Not only do these beetles pose a threat to the plants themselves; if established, they have the potential to impact the availability of ex-

port markets for agricultural commodities grown in the area. Expanding the Japanese beetle internal quarantine and other proposed quarantine amendments will help prevent the spread of this invasive pest and protect Washington's agricultural industries, as well as maintain access to national and international markets.

Other Federal and State Agencies that Regulate this Subject and the Process Coordinating the Rule with These Agencies: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The department is following guidance found in the "National Plant Board Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan." This plan is signed by USDA and outlines requirements for preventing the interstate movement of Japanese beetle from infested states.

Process for Developing New Rule: Department staff will discuss any proposed amendments with affected stakeholder groups. Affected stakeholders will also have an opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed rules during the public comment period and will be able to present oral testimony at the public hearings.

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting Sven Spichiger, Pest Program Manager, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-280-6327, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email SSpichiger@agr.wa.gov, website <https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking>; or Greg Haubrich, Assistant Director, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-902-2071, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email ghaubrich@agr.wa.gov, website <https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking>.

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