

MOA Addresses Grasshopper Treatments in Montana

Grasshoppers - 2021

Grasshopper damage reports were standard in 2020, and this year, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) predicts that sixteen Montana counties may again have a significant grasshopper problem. Those counties are BLAINE, CASCADE, CHOUTEAU, FERGUS, GLACIER, HILL, JUDITH BASIN, LEWIS & CLARK, LIBERTY, MEAGHER, PETROLEUM, PHILLIPS, PONDERA, TETON, TOOLE and VALLEY counties (except Fort Peck Reservation).

Anna Crabtree-Jones with Vilicus Farms was contacted by the Xerxes Society about planned grasshopper treatment in Montana and forwarded the MOA office an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by APHIS that describes plans to treat Montana's 2021 grasshopper crop. The treatment plans are specific for rangeland and provide cost-share funds to ranchers wishing to spray or bait to eliminate the insects. APHIS only treats grasshoppers upon request and after determining that treatment is warranted. This evaluation includes measuring grasshopper densities, identifying species, identifying the insects' biological stage, timing options, and other ecological considerations. The cost-share funds available for treating Federal, State, tribal Trust, and private lands vary depending on the entity that controls the treated parcels.

Review

After reviewing the EA, MOA consulted with several members and experts to review the treatment plans and respond to issues raised in the document. The review team found that there were a dozen issues that APHIS should address to accommodate organic producers.

Response

MOA's response noted that Montana has more than 350 USDA-certified organic operations that vary from farms growing wheat, pulses, and hay to ranchers with livestock to those growing vegetables and fruit as well as handlers, food processors, and more.

In the US, Montana has the third most acres in organic production (over 350,000) and is the number one producer of organic wheat, lentils, chickpeas, emmer, and spelt. It currently has nearly 30,000 acres transitioning to USDA-certified organic production, representing more than 10% of the US total 255,000 transitioning acres.

There are approximately 230 USDA-certified operations in the sixteen counties included within the scope of EA or nearly two-thirds of all USDA-certified organic operations in Montana. MOA is unaware of country-specific data regarding the number of farm and ranch operations and acreages transitioning. USDA Organic Standards require that certified operations be free of prohibited substances for three years.

Accidental exposure to prohibited substances, including aerosol and aquatic drift, can cause certificate suspensions. Consistent with the USDA National Organic Standards, MOA's preference for addressing grasshopper infestations in the state is to control pests "primarily through management practices including physical, mechanical, and biological controls." If these practices are not sufficient, MOA prefers the options of using biological, botanical, or synthetic substances approved for use on the National List, such as BoteGHA, to control pests.

MOA further states that it recognizes that



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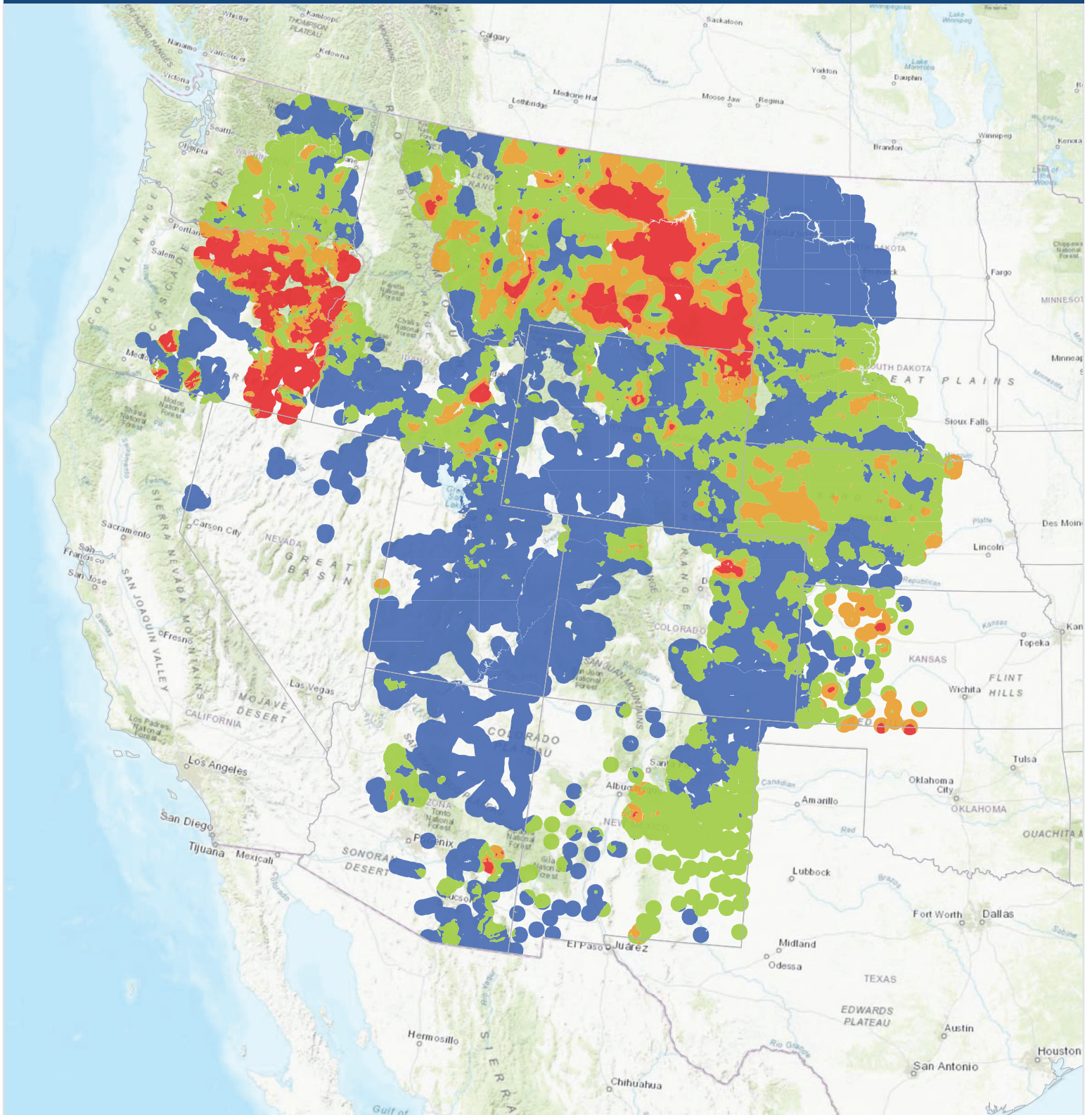
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"In these challenging times, Columbia Grain is taking numerous measures to ensure all of our farmers and employees are supported and safe. We are increasing processing hours at our specialty pulse processing facilities, following all CDC guidelines, following Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), maintaining stringent Food Safety Programs, and adding more team members at our elevators to help farmers stay in their trucks while delivering their grains and pulses. The food supply chain is essential, and we are doing everything necessary to keep all safe and food flowing to nourish the world."

Jeff Van Pevenage, President and CEO



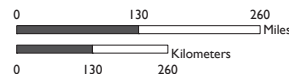
Grasshoppers per sq. yd.

Based on 2020 Adult Survey

0 - <3	246.6 million acres
3 - <8	164.1 million acres
8 - <15	49.6 million acres
15+	34.6 million acres

Data Source: The data summarized in this map were furnished by the respective state, county, university, and/or federal agency using a variety of survey methods and analytical techniques. Due to funding considerations, states may not have continuous survey coverage. This map was prepared by USDA APHIS PPQ in cooperation with CPHST.

Preparation Notes: Adult and treatment survey densities of adult specimens were interpolated to a maximum buffer distance using an empirical Bayesian kriging model. Areas were then filtered by major water features to produce final acreage estimates. Acreages are approximated based on rounding to millions of acres.



USDA, APHIS, PPQ
2150 Centre Ave
Fort Collins, Co 80526

Date Created:
10/8/2020

These data, and all the information contained therein, have been collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), or by its cooperators on APHIS' behalf, for restricted government purposes only and is the sole property of APHIS. See full disclaimer: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/hlp/data-disclaimer>



Thank you!

MOA Sponsors and Members!



Thank you Vilicus Farms for Supporting MOA!

Dear MOA Members: MOA works with organizations like the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), the Organic Trade Association (OTA), and more on policy issues. Many times questions are asked about how farmers are interacting with federal programs; are sign ups going well? Are you being sufficiently notified of programs for your farm? What programs do Montana's organic farmers use? Are there problems with requirements for organic farmers?

Help MOA know what works for you and what doesn't work for you, at any time, by dropping a line. The squeaky wheel really does get the grease. These organizations have the capacity to amplify MOA members concerns with research, collaboration with other organizations, and with excellent contacts in Washington, DC. moamembership@gmail.com

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grasshopper infestations have multiple causes, including those related to natural cycles. Many treatments for these insects do not have effective success rates due to an array of uncontrollable variables, including predicting targeted insect life cycles, weather, and environmental and ecosystem conditions. Further, these treatments can affect non-targeted insect species, including predator species that can potentially control grasshoppers and other pests.

Getting the Word Out

The MOA review team did not believe APHIS planned sufficient efforts to reach Montana's organic farmers affected by the spraying. MOA submitted written comments that recommend including making direct contact with affected organic farmers and ranchers to notify them of planned treatments in addition to posting public notices in newspapers and erecting signage during treatment. Additionally, MOA requested that provisions be made if an organic producer's certificate was jeopardized. APHIS responded positively and planned to address MOA's concerns. Additionally, in the future, MOA will be contacted for notices about projects that affect Montana's organic producers.

Should you reside and farm in the sixteen counties listed, you may receive a letter informing you of planned grasshopper treatment within your area. This letter will have contact information and directions for answering any concerns you may have. You can find EA, the letter MOA sent to APHIS, and more information about grasshoppers on the MOA website.

MOA strives to serve its membership and represent the interests of Montana's organic community. Please let us know of any issues you believe MOA can lend its voice to ensure that your interests are supported.

Call for Nominees

Call For Nominations: MOA Awards

Nominations and Awards The MOA Awards Committee is seeking your nominations for two awards to be presented at the Annual Conference.

The "Lifetime of Service" award goes to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to organic agriculture in Montana. The award went to Ernie Harvey (2020).

A "Leadership in Organics" award goes to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who demonstrates an on-going commitment to advancing the adoption, practice, and success of organic agriculture in Montana. The award went to Ty O'Connor in 2020.

Written nominations may be submitted by MOA members no later than September 1, 2021, by email or regular mail to: Judy Owsowitz, 6505 Farm to Market Rd, Whitefish MT 59937, phone (406) 862-6362, email: terrapin@aboutmontana.net.

Please provide the following information with your nominations:

- 1. Nominee's Name, Address, Phone and Email**
- 2. Describe the nominee's connection to organic agriculture (100 words or less).**
- 3. Why the nominee should receive the award.**

It is preferred that nominees be members of MOA, but Board Members cannot be nominated. Please include your contact information.

The Awards will be presented at the Conference and Awards Banquet in December 2021.