

Ask Laura
Steve Tjosvold
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What is the status of the Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB)?

There have been no finds of BMSB in Santa Cruz County, but there have been individual bugs found in San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties. First reported in Allentown, PA around 1996, it's suspected that BMSB was introduced from China or Japan. Since its introduction into Pennsylvania, it has spread and established through the mid-Atlantic region of the east coast as well as in Portland, Ore., and Los Angeles.

Wherever BMSB takes up residence, it causes severe crop and garden losses and becomes a nuisance to people. BMSB may reach very high numbers, and since one bug can feed on many fruit, losses can be severe. Adults and nymphs suck juices from fruit and seeds, creating pockmarks and distortions that make fruit and vegetables unmarketable. Damaged flesh under the skin turns hard and pithy. BMSB damages fruits (such as apple, pear, stone fruits, and fig), berries, grapes, legumes, vegetables, and shade trees.

BMSB seeks winter shelter, and large numbers may congregate on outside walls or invade homes by entering through small openings. In addition to being a nuisance, it is also a pest in home gardens.

How does it move around?

BMSB can hitchhike in vehicles as stowaways on furniture or other articles. This leads to the rapid spread to new urban areas.

Is it regulated by California or federal authorities?

The BMSB is not a federally actionable pest, meaning that USDA has no federal restrictions currently in place to limit its movement. CDFA has no restrictions in place either, and has assigned the BMSB a "B-rating," leaving all regulatory actions at the discretion of the local agricultural commissioner.

How do you identify the pest?

The brown adult bugs are about ½ to 2/3 inch in diameter, and look like other stink bugs. There is characteristic white banding on antennae and legs. It's best to take a look at the new UC Pest Alert to see detailed images, available online at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PDF/pestalert/brownmarmoratedstinkbug.pdf>