**Be Alert for Spotted Lanternfly**

The spotted lanternfly (SLF) \((Lycorma delicatula)\) is a new non-native invasive insect pest to the United States. It is primarily known to feed on Tree of Heaven \((Ailanthus altissima)\), but has many other host plants, including grape, hop, apple, stone fruit, maple, poplar, walnut, and willow. The insect changes hosts as it goes through its developmental stages. Nymphs feed on a wide range of plant species, while adults prefer to feed and lay eggs on Tree of Heaven. Spotted lanternflies are invasive and can spread rapidly when introduced to new areas. While the insect can walk, jump, or fly short distances, its long-distance spread is facilitated by people who move infested material or items containing egg masses. If allowed to spread in the United States, this pest could damage the country’s grape, orchard, and logging industries. Spotted lanternfly was discovered in 2014 in southeastern Pennsylvania, Berks County. As of March 2020, the insect has spread to additional counties within Pennsylvania and to Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and West Virginia.

A population of the invasive Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) has been found in Mingo Junction just south of Steubenville, along the Ohio River. The initial report came from a resident who spotted a dead adult SLF on a commercial building on October 19, 2020. When Ohio Department of Agriculture and Plant Pest Control inspectors arrived, they were able to capture five live adult SLF in trees located nearby.

Both adults and nymphs feed on stems and leaves, causing sap bleeding and reduced photosynthesis, which can eventually kill the plant.

Now through November is the best time to spot the SLF because it is in its most recognizable stages as a colorful winged adult plant hopper. After hatching in the late spring, the SLF goes through four nymph stages. By midsummer, the nymph SLF can be identified by its red body, roughly a half-inch in size, with black stripes and white dots. During the late summer until roughly November, the SLF is in the adult stage. These adults are larger, roughly one inch in size, with black bodies and brightly colored wings.

The public is the first line of defense against the Spotted lanternfly. If you believe you have seen an SLF in your area, you can contact the Ohio Department of Agriculture, or call the Plant Pest Control Division at 614-728-6400. To prevent the spread, be aware of egg masses. SLF lay eggs on a main host, Tree of Heaven, but also lay eggs on any tree, log, plant, or smooth surface such as stones, vehicles, campers, yard furniture, farm equipment, and other vertical surfaces including metal, sign posts, train tracks and more. It is imperative that people traveling into infested areas check vehicles and objects carefully before leaving a quarantine zone. To prevent the spread of SLF and other known or unknown invasive insects, never move firewood.

You can find more information and photographs on the United States Department of Agriculture’s website, as well as the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Be proactive and “Spot the Spot”!