2025 Domestic Program Summaries

USDA APHIS PPQ WYOMING

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Summary of field activities for Grasshopper/Mormon Cricket Program, Exotic Wood Boring Bark Beetle Program, Biological Control Program, Spongy Moth, Export Services, Soil Permits, Pale Cyst Nematode, Karnal Bunt, and Japanese Beetle completed by Wyoming PPQ personnel during 2025 fiscal year.

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GRASSHOPPER & MORMON CRICKET PROGRAM

PRIVATE LAND AND PERMISSIONS

Monitoring grasshopper populations through adult grasshopper survey data is our best tool for forecasting potential outbreaks and areas of concern. Having more private land permissions allows for a more complete survey of grasshopper populations and thus a better forecasting tool.

Wyoming PPQ recognizes that County Weed and Pest personnel have helped greatly with obtaining permissions for survey. Wyoming PPQ would like to thank cooperating Weed and Pest Districts and encourage continued assistance with permissions so that we may return to our previous survey levels.

GRASSHOPPER AND MORMON CRICKET ACTIVITIES

NEPA

The 2025 Environmental Assessment was available for public comment from May 29 to June 29, 2025. The notice of availability was posted in the legal section of the Casper Star Tribune and on the USDA public webpage. PPQ received many comments and questions during the open comment period. Many comments are repetitive from year to year. Similar comments were grouped together. Comments and questions came from BLM, The Center for Biological Diversity, and The Xerces Society. Comments and questions are being answered/addressed in the comments section (Appendix D). This multi-year EA will be in effect until 2030. Copies of the EA and FONSI are available upon request.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

Wyoming PPQ responded to several Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests in 2025.

CURRENT PENDING LAWSUIT

In May 2022, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Xerces Society (based out of Portland, Oregon) sued the USDA APHIS. The lawsuit is mentioned on the Xerces website: https://xerces.org/press/lawsuit-challenges-federal-pesticide-spraying-program-affecting-millions-of-acres-of-western (click on the word "sued" in the first paragraph for the actual lawsuit document).

USDA APHIS is working with the Office of General Council (OGC), the Department of Justice (DOJ) and PPQ Field Operations staff to gather and catalog documents for an Administrative Record (AR) for each state and a separate AR for the EIS complaint. OGC, DOJ and USDA APHIS have held many virtual meetings to begin the process to

refuting or confirming allegations of the claims. Several Teams meetings have occurred and many more are in the future.

COLLABORATION PROJECTS

Wyoming PPQ has assisted USDA ARS in the collection of Mormon crickets and grasshoppers at Burgess Junction for use in experiments in previous years. Data and conclusions are being complied for research publication.

USDA APHIS CPHST did not conduct any pesticide research plots in Wyoming in 2025.

Wyoming PPQ completed 16 surveys and took 12 collections, of which 1 had Mormon crickets. Weather at the time was off and on rain with only one good day of survey. PPQ was able to collaboration with YNP geologists to better access thermal areas in YNP. Specimens collected in YNP in 2023 and 2024 are pending identification. Any specimens needed to be curated and added to reference collections will be.

TREATMENTS

Wyoming PPQ works cooperatively with county, state, and other federal officials as well as with local landowners and stakeholders in preparation for each grasshopper/Mormon cricket field season. Our success is due to the long-standing respectful, cooperative working relationships with these stakeholders and officials.

Wyoming PPQ completed 4 public landowner meetings in February in Sheridan, Buffalo, Kaycee, and Thermopolis as requested by stakeholders concerned about potential grasshopper populations.

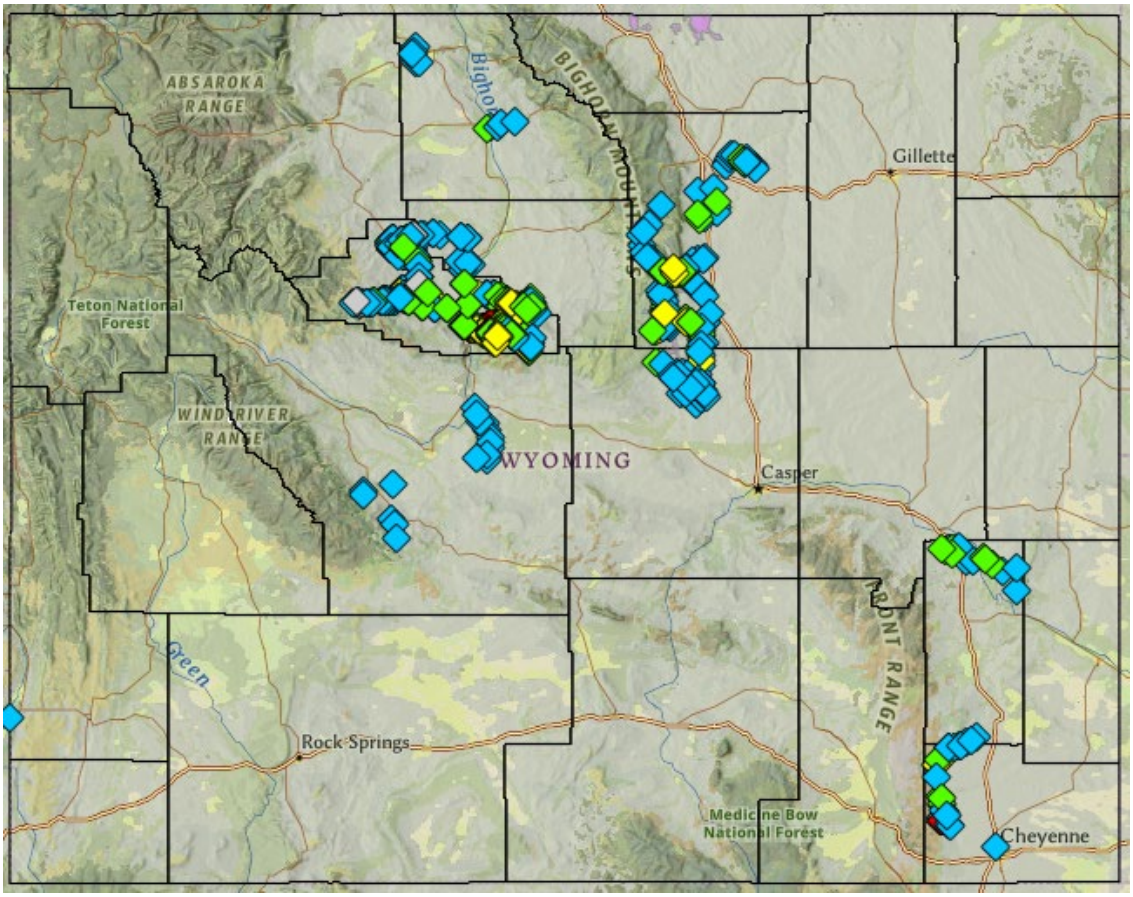
Potential treatment areas under survey surveillance in spring included Crook, Johnson, Natrona Counties and Muddy Gap Area. PPQ did not treat this area due to funding uncertainties, but technical assistance led to county treatments. PPQ did not conduct treatments in 2025.

NYMPHAL SURVEY

Nymphal survey activities were completed with 1 full time seasonal and 1 full time PPQ Officer. Two PPQ employees of other states were able to TDY into Wyoming and assist with 3 weeks of nymphal surveys in June/July. PPQ was unable to fill 5 seasonal employee positions and 3 potentially returning employees either decided not to return or their paperwork was not processed quickly enough to renew the “Not To Exceed Dates”. PPQ Technician Wojtas was lost to staffing challenges in early spring under the federal workforce reduction. (The PPQ Office Manager was also lost as part of the probationary period but then reinstated.) PPQ personnel used iPad minis or smart

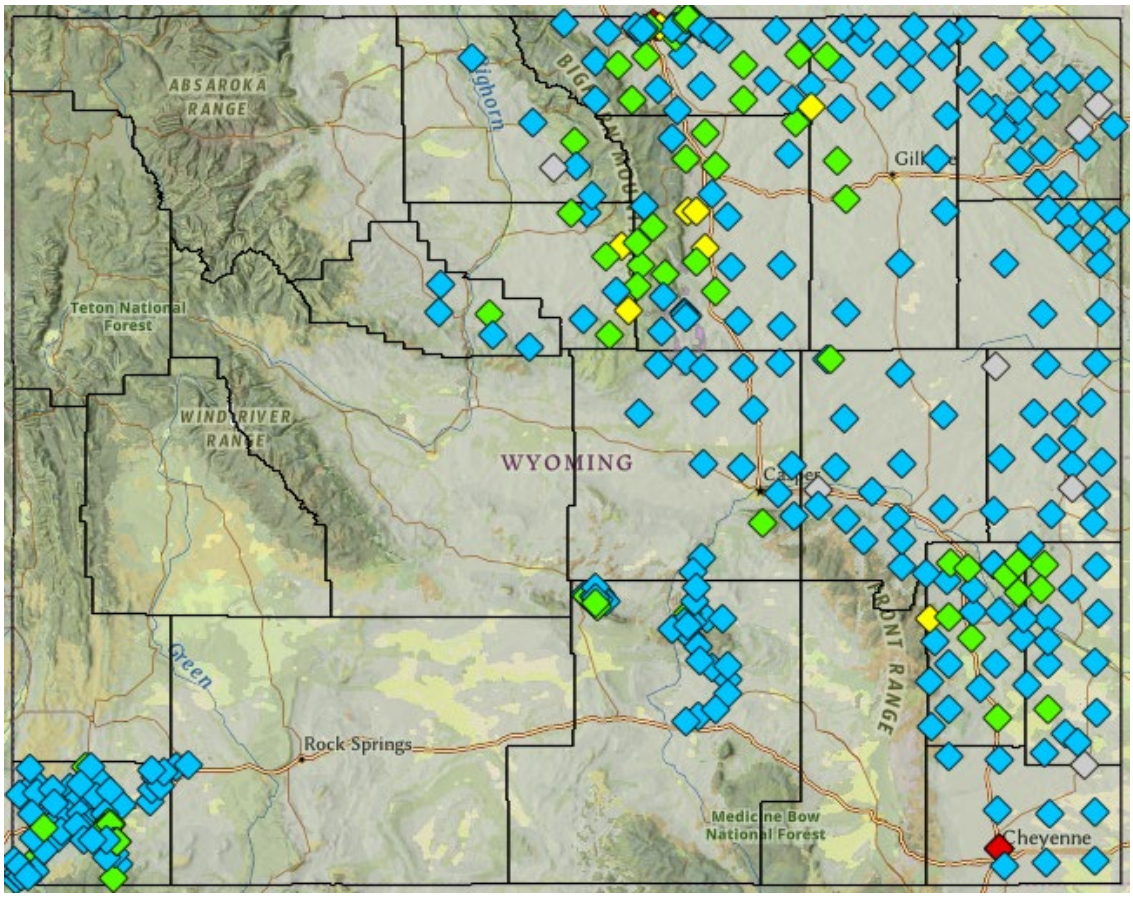
phones with the ESRI Field Maps app to collect grasshopper/Mormon cricket survey data. PPQ also used pre/post treatment options within the data collection template in potential treatment areas. Functionality problems with Field Maps included sign in issues, syncing issues, and map download failures. The USDA Portal would abruptly become unavailable then mysteriously begin working, affecting syncing of data and downloading maps. Multiple times this stopped survey work. These issues were very frustrating for personnel.

PPQ held no seasonal orientation in the Cheyenne office. Wyoming PPQ began seasonal survey activities following the end of college courses. Many locations in Wyoming suffered low snowpack in winter and an early dry spring. Overall, hatch seemed delayed. Nymphal survey was conducted in portions of 7 out of Wyoming's 23 counties. A total of 687 survey stops were completed, and 16 collections were taken during nymphal survey this year. Density counts ranged from 0 to 47. Please see map below for 2025 Nymphal Grasshopper Survey in Wyoming.



ADULT SURVEY

PPQ did not host a Mid-Season Meeting for employees this year. Beginning July 7th, Wyoming PPQ personnel conducted adult survey focusing on 1) CDS sites, 2) post-treatment areas where Weed and Pest treated, and 3) areas that burned in 2024. Our one seasonal employee left PPQ to return to university August 22nd. Not attending State Fair for a week assisted Wyoming PPQ in completing survey efforts this year. Severe heat and wildfires were again part of the challenges faced by employees while completing adult surveys. Adult survey was conducted in 16 of Wyoming's 23 counties. A total of 357 survey stops were completed, and 218 collections were made. Density counts ranged from 0 to 32 grasshoppers per square yard. Please see map below for 2025 Adult Grasshopper Survey in Wyoming.

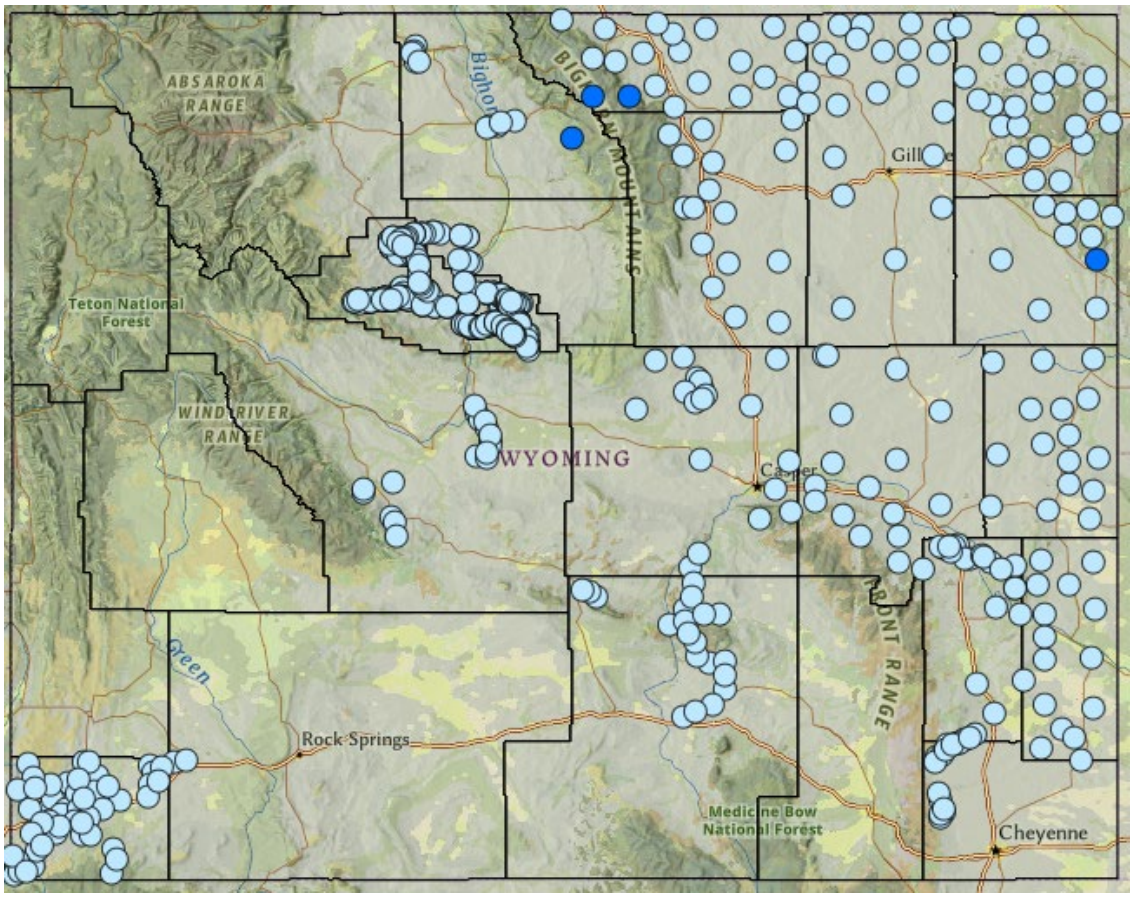


WILDFIRE IMPACT ON SURVEY ACTIVITIES

Wyoming PPQ personnel faced additional challenges during adult survey due to wildfires in Wyoming. Personnel had to leave areas for safety in some instances. In other areas, wildfires came through after surveys were completed which raised questions of what those survey data mean for the following year in respect to grasshopper hatch in burned areas.

MORMON CRICKET SURVEY

Wyoming PPQ personnel scout for Mormon crickets all season long in conjunction with completing nymphal and adult grasshopper surveys. If localized outbreaks occurred, PPQ did not find them. No treatments were conducted on MC by PPQ. Overall, Wyoming PPQ personnel completed 482 nymphal Mormon cricket survey stops, 233 adult Mormon cricket survey stops and made 2 collections. Density counts ranged from 0 to 1 Mormon crickets per square yard. Please see map below for 2025 Mormon Cricket Survey in Wyoming.



EXOTIC WOOD BORER AND BARK BEETLE PROGRAM

The exotic wood borer and bark beetle (EWBBB) program surveys by trapping for woodboring insects that are not known to occur in Wyoming or the United States but could become invasive if they become established. These exotic insects have the potential to kill trees and disrupt native forest ecosystems. Some have already caused a great deal of ecological and economic damage in coniferous forests in their native ranges in Europe or northern Asia.

When targeting a site for trap placement, special emphasis is given to the movement of firewood and other wood products as possible pathways for introduction of exotic wood borers. Protection of our natural resources and support of our forest products industry in Wyoming is a primary goal. Exotic forest pests pose a significant threat to the economic viability of this industry.

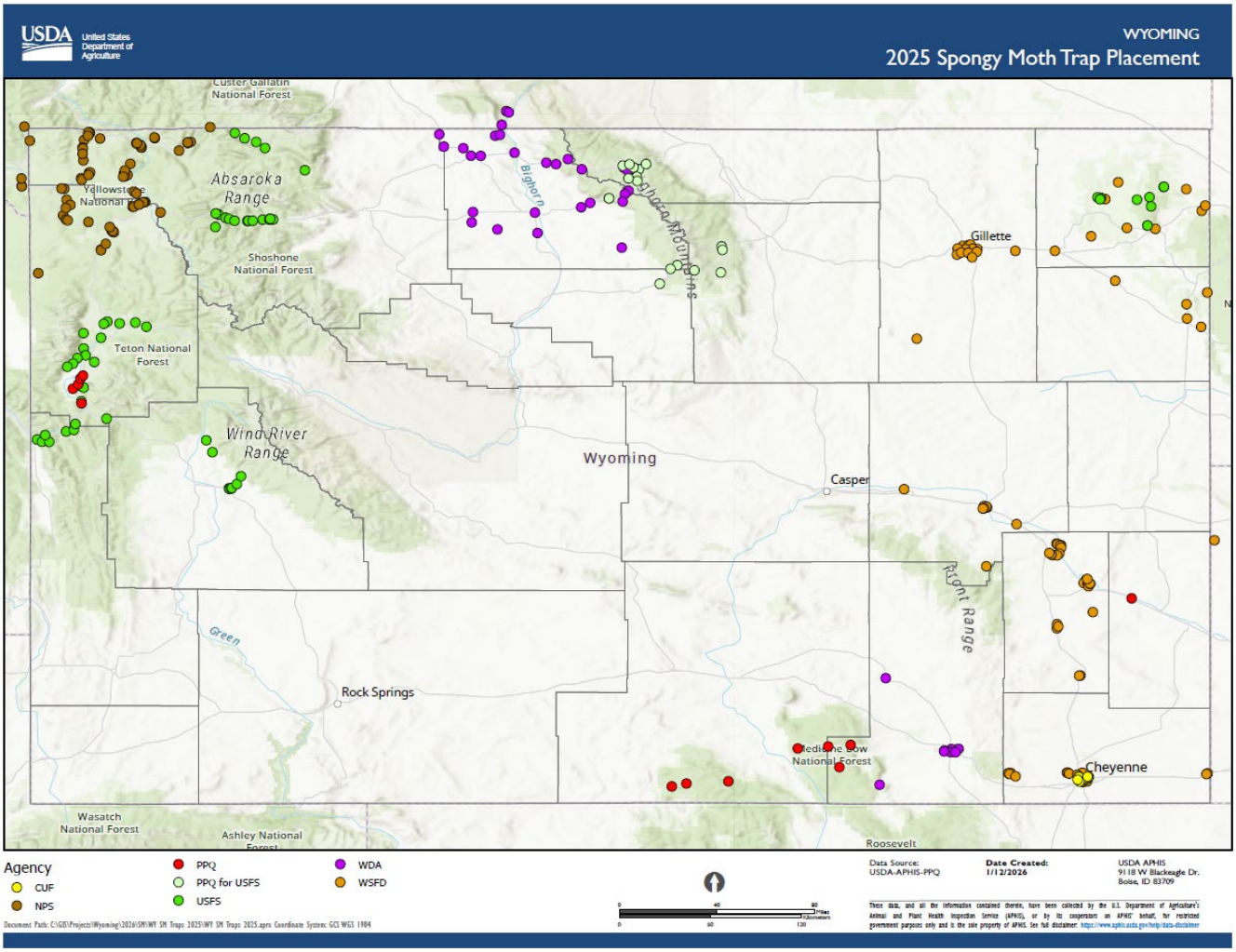
The Pest Survey Specialist position which coordinates this work has been vacant since March 10, 2023. Severe short staffing challenges resulted in the inability to conduct any EWBBB activities in 2025.

SPONGY MOTH (formerly known as Gypsy Moth)

The spongy moth trapping survey in Wyoming relies upon PPQ's cooperation with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA), Wyoming State Forestry Division (WSFD), the National Park Service (NPS), the United States Forest Service (USFS), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) stationed on F. E. Warren Airforce Base. Wyoming PPQ is the coordinating agency and provides traps and lures for this program. The various Forest Service regions are responsible for placing traps at campgrounds within their designated borders. The National Park Service provides trapping efforts in Yellowstone National Park. WDA provides trapping efforts in three counties in which field offices are located. Trapping takes place on a 2-year schedule, with different counties being trapped during alternate years. Trapping at F.E. Warren AFB, in National Forests, and Yellowstone Park occurs every year. This year's severe staffing challenges impacted spongy moth survey efforts. PPQ prioritized and reduced the number of traps deployed from 39 in 5 counties down to 13 in 3 counties. PPQ assisted USFS with trapping efforts to cover 16 traps in the Big Horn Mountains. USFS deployed 103 traps: down from the normal 110 traps. USFWS was unable to deploy their trap to cover FE Warren Airforce Base. Next year USFWS will increase to 2 traps to cover the base due to the installation of a new campground on base. NPS was able to deploy all 75 traps. WDA was able to deploy traps with a slight increase from 30 traps to 39 traps. WSFD was able to deploy 96 traps. All traps collected this year were

negative for spongy moth. The chart below summarizes 2025 trapping efforts by agency. The map below the chart shows trap distribution by agency.

Agency	Normal Trap Number	2025 Year of Challenges Trap Number	Area Traps Not Deployed
PPQ	39	13	Carbon County, Goshen County, Baggs/Seminoe
USFS	110	88	BLM Lander, Bridger Teton NF
USFWS	1	0	FEW AFB
NPS	75	75	
WDA	30	39	
WSFD	98	96	



BIOLOGICAL CONTROL PROGRAM

Biological Control program efforts were shadowed by needs of the GHMC program and the severe lack of staff this year.

WHITE TOP (*LEPIDIUM DRABA*)

WHITE TOP GALL MITE (*ACERIA DRABAE*)

No PPQ activities this year.

CANADA THISTLE (*CIRSIUM ARVENSE*)

CANADA THISTLE RUST FUNGUS (*PUCCINIA PUNCTIFORMIS*)

Canada thistle rust (CTR) fungus efforts were again impacted this year by the decision from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Currently both APHIS and EPA regulate biological control agents under applicable federal laws. APHIS's regulatory authorities include importation, interstate transport, and release into the environment of biological control organisms which include invertebrates to control plant pests or noxious weeds, microbial pathogens to control plant pests or noxious weeds, microbial parasites to control plant pathogens, and others as determined by APHIS. EPA's regulatory authority includes pesticides as defined under FIFRA section 2(u) and pesticidal intent (per 40 CFR 152.15). Under FIFRA certain biological control agents are exempt from regulation because "they are adequately regulated by another federal agency". According to EPA, *P. punctiformis* is a biopesticide and is not specifically exempt from regulation under FIFRA.

Continuing from previous years, new releases of CTR and other biological control pathogens should cease at new sites until the issue is resolved.

EPA and USDA were working through the issue with the assistance of USDA Office of Pest Management Policy and USDA Office of General Counsel personnel. Changes and challenges brought on in early spring of 2025 with the reduction in federal workforce have impacted this. Wyoming PPQ will be happy to share updates with cooperators as appropriate.

Wyoming PPQ sites were monitored by visual survey for presence of rust fungus and standardized impact monitoring (SIMP) study sites were monitored according to SIMP protocols as follows:

Uinta County:

- 1 SIMP study site near Lone Tree
- 2 release sites near Mountain View
- 1 release site near Robertson

- 3 release sites near Lone Tree

Sweetwater County:

- 2 SIMP study sites in Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge
- 1 release site in Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge

Carbon County:

- 1 release site on private property

Laramie County:

- 1 release site in Curt Gowdy State Park
- 1 SIMP Site on F.E. Warren Airforce Base

RUSSIAN KNAPWEED (*RHAPONICUM REPENS*)

GALL MIDGE (*JAAPIELLA IVANNIKOVI*)

PPQ monitored the Riverton Research site for Tim Collier this year. Personnel monitored and collected data once in June, July, and August. Galls can be found from the entrance gate all along the road back to the cottonwood trees and throughout the original release site. New galls are not typical past mid-August due to lack of moisture and new growth. No other sites were monitored by PPQ. No releases made by PPQ this year.

GALL WASP (*AULACIDEA ACROPTILONICA*)

Galls at the Riverton Research site can be found throughout the site beginning at the entrance and extending back to the original *Jaapiella* release site. Several Russian knapweed plants have both *Aulacidea* galls and *Jaapiella* galls. *Aulacidea* seems to establish quicker and survive winters better. No releases were made by PPQ this year.

ADVENTITIOUS RUST FUNGUS (*PUCCINIA ACROPTILI*)

The Riverton Research site had many infected plants and many of these had major dieback in early August 2024 and August of 2025. BC Cooperators in Colorado saw many sites with this rust fungus across monitoring sites beginning in 2019 and saw increased infected plants in July 2024.

SPOTTED KNAPWEED (*CENTAUREA MACULOSA*)

ROOT FEEDING WEEVIL (*CYPHLOCLEONUS ACHATES*)

Wyoming PPQ requested releases from Montana BC program and were on the list to receive the full requested amount, but due to severe short staffing challenges canceled the request. No PPQ activities this year.

SEED FEEDING WEEVIL (*LARINUS MINUTUS*)

Wyoming PPQ received insects for 6 releases from Montana this year (200 adult weevils per release.) PPQ released 2 on private property in cooperation with the landowner and 4 went to Cheyenne City Weed and Pest for distribution.

ROOT BORING MOTH (*AGAPETA ZOEGANA*)

No PPQ activities this year.

FIELD BINDWEED (*CONVOLVULUS ARVENSIS*)

BINDWEED MITE (*ACERIA MALHERBAE*)

No PPQ activities this year.

BINDWEED MOTH (*TYTA LUCTUOSA*)

No PPQ activities this year. PPQ stumbled upon adults behind the office in August while completing other training.

DALMATIAN TOADFLAX (*LINARIA DALMATICA*)

STEM MINING WEEVIL (*MECINUS JANTHINIFORMIS*)

Wyoming PPQ received 10 releases (250 adults per release) from Montana BC project this year. Three releases went to Platte County Weed and Pest, 3 releases went to Natrona County Weed and Pest, 2 releases went to Fish and Wildlife Service on F. E. Warren Airforce Base, and 2 releases were conducted by PPQ at Curt Gowdy State Park.

YELLOW TOADFLAX (*LINARIA VULGARIS*)

STEM MINING WEEVIL (*MECINUA JANTHINUS*)

No PPQ activities this year.

LEAFY SPURGE (*EUPHORBIA ESULA*)

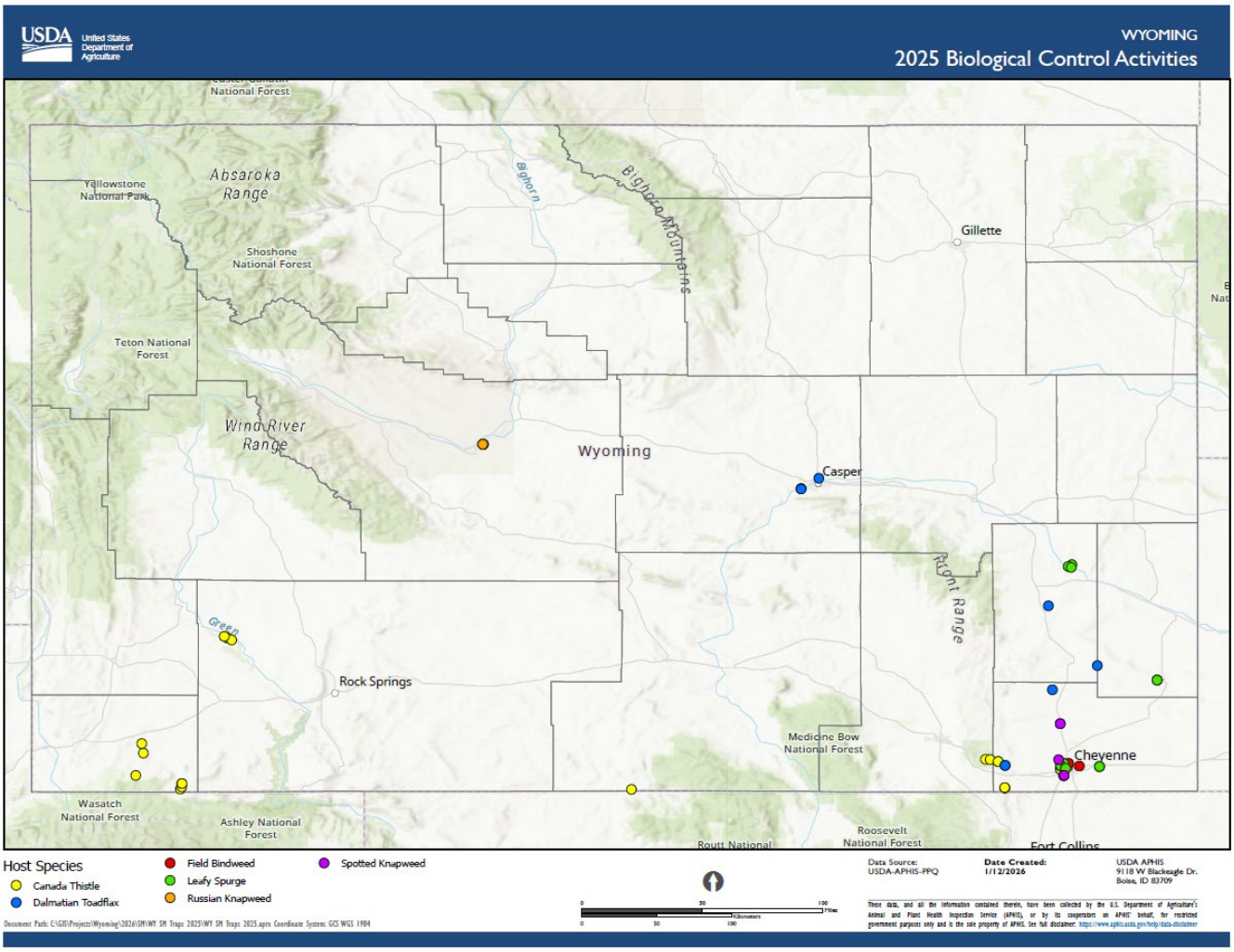
SPURGE FLEA BEETLES (*APTHONA SP.)*

Wyoming PPQ received 12 releases (1200 adults beetles per release) from Montana BC project this year. Three releases went to Laramie County Weed and Pest, 3 releases went to Goshen County Weed and Pest, 3 releases went to Platte County Weed and Pest, and 3 releases went to Fish and Wildlife Servies on F. E. Warren Airforce Base. The SIMP Site on F. E. Warren Airforce Base was monitored in cooperation with USFWS.

RED-HEADED STEM BORER (*OBEREA ERYTHROCEPHALA*)

Wyoming PPQ personnel made 2 releases (50 adult beetles per release) with Fish and Wildlife Services on F. E. Warren.

The map below shows biocontrol activities by target weed.



Pale Cyst Nematode

Pale Cyst Nematode (PCN) (scientific name *Globodera pallida)* is a 1-mm long roundworm and a pest of potatoes which at high densities can cause reduced yield for potato growers. Reduced yields are caused by feeding damage on potato plant roots and retarding growth. To test for this pest, soil samples are collected after harvest at the rate of one five pound sample per acre. Samples are tested at PPQ's lab in Idaho Falls, Idaho. In Wyoming, only fields that are growing potatoes for potential export are tested. Sampling is a cooperative effort between PPQ, WDA, and CAPS.

All samples from 2024 were negative. A total of 233 samples from 2 fields were collected and delivered to the PCN Lab in Idaho in November 2025 after the government shutdown ended. 2025 results are pending.

Karnal Bunt

Karnal bunt is a fungal disease of wheat which invades kernels leaving behind waste products of a disagreeable odor making bunted kernels unpalatable for use in flour. Karnal bunt survey occurs in grain elevators in Wyoming which accept wheat from counties above a certain production threshold, and sampling is conducted every other year. In 2024, WDA collected samples from 5 elevators: 4 in Laramie County and 1 in Goshen County. The samples were sent to the national Karnal Bunt Lab in Arizona, and no traces of the fungus were detected. No work for Karnal Bunt was done in 2025. Samples will be collected and analyzed in 2026 according to the National Karnel bunt survey protocols.

Japanese Beetle

Japanese Beetle (JB) is an exotic scarab beetle that can cause defoliating damage to a wide range of plants, including many deciduous trees and shrubs which are commonly planted in parks or garden settings. The larva of the beetle can also cause damage to turf grass with its burrowing and feeding activity. APHIS authority and survey protocol only allows PPQ personnel to trap at international airports or airports that receive flights from JB regulated airports. Due to staffing shortages, no JB traps were placed by PPQ in 2024 or 2025.

The existing JB population in Sheridan is continuing to be managed by city arborist Clark Van Hoosier.

Regulated Garbage

PPQ partners with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to ensure that food waste from international flights does not become a pathway for exotic pests to enter the United States. There are now two companies (Aero Center and Atlantic Air) under compliance with CBP/PPQ to handle RG at Casper International Airport.

Export Certification Services

Minimal export services were requested from Wyoming PPQ personnel in 2025. Only a handful of calls were received with inquiries for shipping or carrying in passenger baggage potted plants as gifts or seeds for planning in/into various European countries.

Soil Permits

Wyoming PPQ monitors and enforces regulation of imported foreign soil and movement of domestic soils out of or through quarantine zones with permits and compliance agreements. A permit holder in Sheridan is in good standing. A permit holder in Jackson is in good standing. Five permit holders in Laramie are in good standing. A permit holder in Cheyenne is in good standing. Wyoming PPQ will continue to assist with APHIS eFile.