

P r o g r e s s

E d u c a t i o n

S c i e n c e

T e c h n o l o g y

Vol. 8 No. 3 Dec. 2003

Quarterly Newsletter
on Western Gulf
Forest Pest Management
Issues

PEST is a quarterly newsletter that provides up-to-date information on existing forest pest problems, exotic pests, new pest management technology, and current pesticide registrations in pine seed orchards and plantations. The newsletter focuses on, but is not limited to, issues occurring in the Western Gulf Region (including, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas).

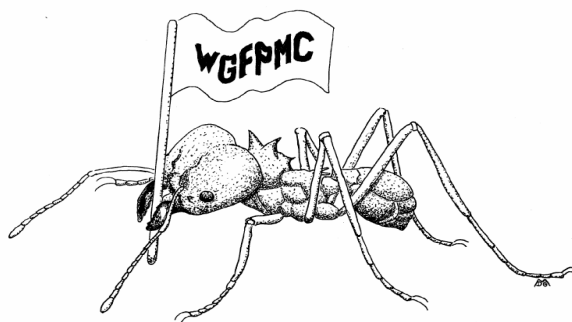
Announcement:

DuPont Acquires Griffin

(Source: GA Pest Mgt.
Newsletter, Nov. 2003)

Griffin L.L.C. became a wholly-owned subsidiary of DuPont in November 2003. Griffin has five pesticide manufacturing sites in North and South America and produces **Volcano®** for control of the **Texas leaf-cutting ant**. DuPont said that the acquisition would help them offer a greater variety of chemicals for cotton, fruit, vegetables, and professional products. **Note:** After hearing of the acquisition, I contacted Jimmy Whately, Griffin L.L.C. He indicates that production of Volcano® is continuing and should not be affected by the DuPont acquisition.

Western Gulf Forest Pest Management Cooperative



Texas Forest Service, Forest Pest Management,
P.O. Box 310, Lufkin, Texas 75902-0310

A Reminder: Pounce On Those Weevils Before They Pounce On Your Seedlings

As you make preparations to replant harvested tracts this coming winter and spring, be aware that damage caused by reproduction weevils can mean the difference between acceptable first-year seedling survival and having to replant again the following year.



Reproduction weevils (*Hylobius pales* and *Pachylobius picivorus* (left)) can cause serious losses (in some cases >60%) to pine seedlings on certain sites. The weevils feed on the roots and stems of newly-planted pine seedlings, often girdling and killing them.

Not all tracts of land are susceptible to weevil damage. Research conducted by the WGFPNC has determined that weevils are most likely to be a problem on those tracts harvested after July and planted within nine months, particularly those receiving little or no site preparation (Grosman et al. 1999). Weevils tend to breed in fresh stumps and slash material and the new generation of weevils emerges from the stumps and attacks pine seedlings in the spring and early summer. Sites harvested prior to August and planted the following winter and/or having received intensive site preparation are seldom affected by weevils.

To reforest moderate to high hazard sites (those harvested in the fall and winter, just prior to planting), landowners should consider purchasing and planting pine seedlings treated with Pounce® 3.2 EC. Pounce® is a

Continued on Page 2

Pounce (continued from page 1)

pyrethroid insecticide registered in most southern states (AL, AR, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, TX, VA, and most recently in TN and MS) to protect newly-planted pine seedlings from damage or loss to reproduction weevils. The insecticide is applied to seedlings in the nursery just prior to lifting. Evaluations of tracts planted with either Pounce®-treated or untreated seedlings in 1998 showed that the Pounce® treatment reduced weevil-caused seedling mortality by 71%.

Several people have asked “When can I plant Pounce®-treated seedlings and how long will the protection last?” The WGFPNC conducted a laboratory trial to determine the actual residual duration of Pounce®. Weevils, periodically exposed to sections of Pounce®-treated pine seedlings, experienced 100% mortality 2½ months after seedling treatment and still experienced 50% mortality 6 months after seedling treatment. These results indicate that landowners can plant Pounce®-treated seedling as early as December and be confident that Pounce® residuals will be high enough during the critical period (March through May) when weevils are most abundant (see figure below).

Although the active ingredient of Pounce® (permethrin) has a relatively low toxicity to humans, care should be used when handling and planting treated pine seedlings. Tree planters should wear gloves (nitrile, neoprene, or Vitron® brand) and long-sleeve shirts. Avoid contact of the insecticide with eyes, skin, or clothing. Wash thoroughly after

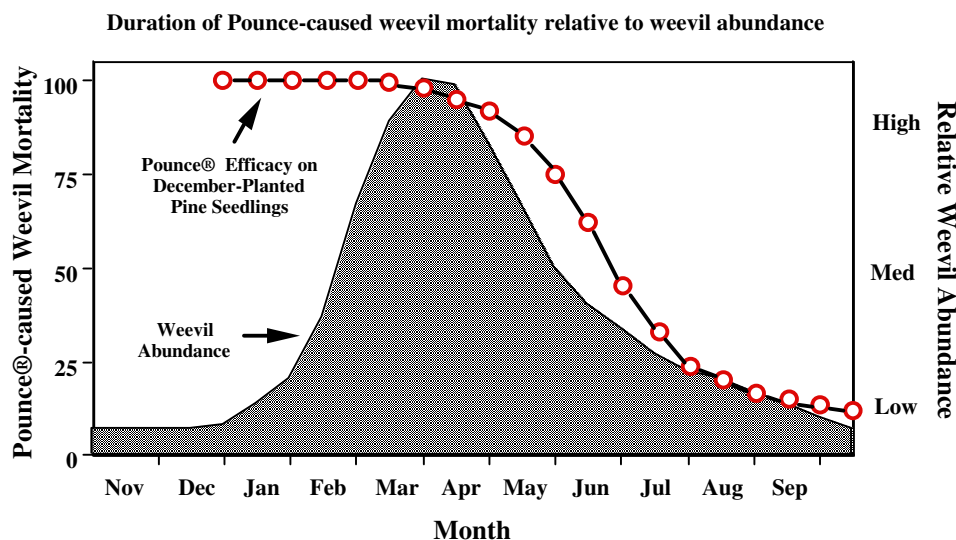
handling treated seedlings and follow instructions on the Pounce® label.

Pounce®-treated seedlings will be available for the 2003 - 2004 planting season at a small additional cost (\$4-\$5 per 1000 seedlings) from the International Paper's Super Tree Nurseries, Bullard and Livingston, TX and Bluff City, AR and Texas Forest Service's Indian Mound Nursery, Alto, TX.

For more information on the availability and cost of Pounce®-treated seedlings, contact your local conifer seedling nursery. For additional information on pine reproduction weevils or Pounce® insecticide, contact Don Grosman at 936/639-8170 or dgrosman@tfs.tamu.edu or see the references below.

References:

- Cade, S.C., Lynch, A. M., Hedden, R. L., and Walstad, J. D. 1981. Seedling debarking weevils: A site hazard-rating system case history. p. 27-30. In: Hedden R. L. et al. (eds) Hazard rating systems in Forest Insect Pest Management. Gen. Tech Rep. WO-27. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.
- Doggett, C. A., Grady, C. R.; Green, H. J., (and others). 1977. Seedling debarking weevils in North Carolina. For. Note 31. Raleigh, NC: Department of Natural and Economic Resources, North Carolina Forest Service; 15 p.
- Grosman, D. M., Billings, R. F., McCook, F. A., and Upton, W. W. 1999. Influence of harvest date and silvicultural practices on the abundance and impact of pine reproduction weevils in western gulf pine plantations. Gen. Tech Rep. SRS-30. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station; p. 565-568.
- Nord, J. C., Ghent, J. H., Thomas, H. A. and Doggett, C. A. 1982. Control of pales and pitch-eating weevils in the South. For. Rep. SA-FR 21. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Region. 24 p.
- Nord, J. C., Ragenovich, I. and Doggett, C. A. 1984. Pales weevil. Forest Insect & Disease Leaflet 104. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Region. 8 p.
- Thatcher, R. C. 1960. Influence of the pitch-eating weevil on pine regeneration in east Texas. For. Sci. 6: 354-361.
- Walstad, J. D. and Nord, J. C. 1975. Applied aspects of pales weevil control. Down to Earth 31: 8-12.



Invasive Insects, Diseases, and Weeds Threatening Western Gulf States

Insects

1. **Emerald ash borer:** *Agrilus planipennis* (Buprestidae). Exotic pest of ash, recently introduced from Asia; present in southeastern Michigan, Ontario, Virginia, Maryland, and northwestern Ohio. May infest and kill small to very large trees. Symptoms include dead or dying ash with D-shaped exit holes and winding, sawdust-filled galleries under the bark. Adults are bright green, about 13 mm (½") long.
2. **Asian longhorned beetle:** *Anoplophora glabripennis* (Cerambycidae). Large black beetle, 20 - 40 mm (¾-1½") long with white spots and long black and white antennae; introduced into northeastern U.S. in 1996. Attacks and kills a variety of hardwoods, preferring maples (also poplar, willow, elm, etc.). Symptoms are declining trees with large, circular exit holes and boring dust in bark of trunk and large limbs.
3. **Gypsy moth:** *Lymantria dispar* (Lymantriidae). Introduced from Europe and well-established in eastern U.S. Larva is hairy with parallel rows of red dots on body. Feeds on and defoliates a variety of hardwoods, particularly oaks. Females are unable to fly and larvae disperse on silken threads. Egg masses may be transported long distances on recreational vehicles, outdoor furniture, etc.
4. **European wood wasp:** *Sirex noctilio* (Siricidae). Introduced pest of pines, including loblolly pine, in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, and South America. Larva is cylindrical, creamy white grub without legs, up to 30 mm (1¼") long. Larval tunnels in wood are packed with chewed bark. Adult of variable size (9-36 mm) with four yellow membranous wings. Infested trees have discolored foliage and may be killed.
5. **Pine shoot beetle:** *Tomicus piniperda* (Scolytidae). Established in Lake States, where infestations are of concern in Christmas tree plantations. Southern pines are suitable hosts. Adults are black beetles about the size of a match head. They bore in pith of pine shoots for maturation feeding. Attacks seldom kill the host tree, but cause shoot dieback. Larvae feed in pine stumps and logs.

Disease

6. **Sudden oak death:** Caused by the newly-identified fungus *Phytophthora remorum*. Detected in several counties in California and Oregon on oaks and variety of other hardwoods and some conifers. Cankers and black ooze on trunk of affected trees precede death.

Weeds

7. **Cogongrass:** *Imperata cylindrica*. Introduced from Southeast Asia to the southern U.S. in the early 1900s for forage and erosion control. Cogongrass forms dense, perennial colonies and resembles Johnson grass. This grass prefers full sun; leaf blades tend to be a yellow-green color, and often have off-center midveins.
8. **Japanese Climbing Fern:** *Lygodium japonicum*. Native to Asia and Australia, this fern was brought to the U.S. in the 1930s as an ornamental plant. It is a climbing, twining, mat-forming fern that invades open forests, road edges, and wet areas. Leaves are mostly deciduous, opposite, compound, lacy, and finely divided.
9. **Chinese Silvergrass:** *Miscanthus sinensis*. Introduced from Asia and widely sold and planted as an ornamental. Perennial, densely bunched grass, 5-10 feet tall. Blades may be 40" long with the midvein white above and green beneath. Very flammable and can be a fire hazard.
10. **Tropical Soda Apple:** *Solanum viarum*. Native to South America and found in Florida in the 1980s, this plant is an upright, thorny, perennial shrub with large, oak-shaped, velvety, alternate, thorny leaves. Stems also have thorns and the plant bears spherical, mottled, green to yellow fruit about 1½" in diameter.
11. **Japanese Knotweed:** *Polygonum cuspidatum*. Introduced from Asia in the late 1800s for erosion control and as an ornamental, this plant can tolerate almost any site. It is an upright perennial shrub that forms dense thickets. Stems are hollow like bamboo and the alternate, pointed leaves may be 6" long and 5" wide.
12. **Porcelain Berry:** *Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*. Native to China and Russia, this climbing, deciduous, woody vine in the grape family was brought to the U.S. as a landscape plant in the 1870s. Leaves are simple, alternate, dark green, 3-5 lobed, with coarsely toothed edges. Berries mature in the fall and range in color from white to steel blue.
13. **Multiflora Rose:** *Rosa multiflora*. Brought to the U.S. from Japan in the 1860s as rootstock for ornamental roses and later used as living fences and for erosion control. A thorny perennial shrub having alternate compound leaves, showy, fragrant white to pink flowers, and small red fruits that remain on the plant through the winter.

If you detect any of these invasive pests in Texas, contact Joe Pase or Don Grosman, TFS Forest Pest Management in Lufkin (Phone 936-639-8170; e-mail = jpase@tfs.tamu.edu or dgrosman@tfs.tamu.edu), or Kim Camilli, TFS Forest Pest Management in Austin (Phone: 512-371-7011; e-mail = kcamilli@tfs.tamu.edu). For more information and photos, visit the invasive and exotic species web site at <http://www.invasive.org/>.

Things You Might Be Interested to Know . . .

“New” Ant Bait Registered in TX & LA

I just heard from Dr. Bart Drees, TCE, that "Grant's Total Ant Killer Bait" has recently been registered by Grant Laboratories, Inc. in Texas and Louisiana for control of several species ants including the Texas leaf-cutting ant. This is the same formulation as the old Amdro® Leaf-cutting Ant Bait originally manufactured by American Cyanamid. The Grant product has good characteristics that should make it appealing to forest managers and private landowners as a control option for sites other than pine reforestation areas which is covered by Volcano®. However, applicators should keep in mind that this bait formulation does have a few limitations.

The positive attributes of the Grant bait include the following: 1) it is registered for control of 15 ant species including the Texas leaf-cutting ant; 2) it can be applied on most sites, i.e., lawns, landscaped areas, golf courses, ornamental gardens, and other non-crop lands such as roadsides, commercial grounds, etc., as well as grounds surrounding poultry houses, corrals and other animal holding areas; 3) it can be purchased from several stores and locations in Texas (contact dgrosman@tfs.tamu.edu for a complete list); and 4) this is a safer control option than applying contact poisons, i.e., Orthene® or Sevin® dusts, often many times without success.

One limitation of the Grant bait is that it is the same formulation as the old Amdro® bait which was about 30% effective in halting ant activity with a single application in the early- and mid-1990's. In other words, it may be necessary to retreat a colony two or more times before it is killed. It may be possible to improve this efficacy level by keeping in mind that the bait is sensitive to light and heat. It is strongly recommended that bait containers be stored in a cool site away from sunlight. Also be aware that this bait is what is referred to as an “oil bait” (one component that makes the bait attractive is soy bean oil). Prolonged exposure of the bait to air may turn the oil rancid (stale) and unattractive to the ants. It is recommended that the bait be used within 3 months once the container is opened.

Don Grosman

Pesticide Storage: Is Temperature Important?

(Source: Georgia Pest Mgt. Newsletter, Nov. 2003)

Do you ever wonder if your pesticide shed is too hot or too cold? The University of Missouri Extension Service has a publication that can help. You can find specific storage temperature information for a range of fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides at: <http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/agguides/pests/ipm1012.htm>

Potential Alternative to Methyl Bromide

(Source: *Pesticide & Toxic Chemical News*, 8/4/03 via Chemically Speaking, Sept., 03)

An Auburn University researcher believes that sodium azide may be a good replacement for methyl bromide, and may be potentially better than this material for two reasons. Sodium azide applied via drip irrigation has shown yield results in Alabama, Florida, and California that are equivalent to or better than those using methyl bromide. The material also breaks down within a couple of weeks. The chemical's manufacturer, American Pacific, is trying to register the compound under the trade name SEP-100.

Other Pesticide News

(Source: Green Magazine, Mar., Apr. & Jul. 2003 and Illinois Pesticide Review, May, Sept., Nov. 2003)

FOSPHITE (potassium phosphate)—JH Biotec—A new fungicide to control downy mildew, *Phytophthora*, and *Pythium* on ornamental plants, bedding plants, **forests** and Christmas trees. [fungicide]

VISTA (fluoxypry)—Dow AgroSciences—A new herbicide developed to control broadleaf weeds and grasses in noncrop areas. [herbicide]

BORDEAUX mixture (copper)—Gordon's, Dexol — A fungicide labeled for control of certain diseases of **evergreens**, shrubs, shade trees, etc. As a result of the IR-4 Project it is now labeled for use on Christmas trees. [fungicide]

PENNANT MAGNUM (s-metolachlor)—Syngenta — As a result of the IR-4 Project the manufacturer can now add to the label use on **pine, fir**, blanket flower, nandina, palm, and sweet William. [herbicide]

Continued on Page 4

POUNCE (*permethrin*)—*FMC, Agro Solutions* —Special Local Need labels (24(c)) were approved in **Tennessee** and **Mississippi** for application in **conifer nurseries** to control **regeneration weevils**. [insecticide]

LANDMARK (*chlorsulfuron/sulfoeturon-methyl*)—*DuPont*—A new combination herbicide developed for use in **forestry** applications, unimproved turf grasses, and noncrop areas. [herbicide]

MEDALLION (*fludioxonil*)—*Syngenta*—As a result of the IR-4 Project, they can now add to their label the use on **ash**, nonbearing cherry, crabapple, peach, magnolia, **maple**, and **oak**. [fungicide]

FLAGSHIP (*thiamethoxam*)—*Syngenta*—Registration is expected in the near future for use on greenhouse-grown ornamentals. [insecticide]

FORBID (*spiromesifen*)—*Bayer Environmental Sciences*—Being developed to control various insects and mites on shrubs, flowers, and **trees**. [insecticide]

PRO STAR (*flutoloni*)—*Bayer Environmental Sciences*—Added to their label the control of rhizoctonia and rust in ornamental plants. It can be used in shade houses, in greenhouses, and on outdoor containers and field-grown ornamental nursery stock. [fungicide]

ACEPHATE 77WP—*United Industries* —A new formulation for use on tobacco, peanuts, vegetables, cotton, ornamentals, turf, and noncrop areas. [insecticide]

SEVIN 50WP (*carbaryl*)—*Bayer*—Added to their label the control of mosquitoes and fire ants, and the use in **forest areas** and rangelands. [insecticide]

TOPSIN-M (*thiophanate-methyl*)—*Cerexagri*—As a result of the IR-4 Project, they can now put on their label the use on **white pine**. [fungicide]

TAHOE (*triclopyr*)—*Nufarm*—A new formulation used to control brush species in rights-of-way, **forests** and other areas. [herbicide]

ARABESQUE (*Muscodor albus*)—*Agra Quest*—This natural fumigant is being developed to replace **methyl bromide**. It was discovered on the bark of the cinnamon tree. The company is exploring whether it can be used as a natural way to kill pathogens in soil before crops are planted. [fungicide]

BANNER MAXX (*propiconazole*)—*Syngenta*—As a result of the IR-4 Project, they can now add to their label the use on **poplar** trees. [fungicide]

ENDEAVOR (*pymetrozine*)—*Syngenta*—As a result of the IR-4 Project, they can now put on their label the use on **ash**, nonbearing crabapple, honey locust, **oak**, **maple**, wisteria, and yew. [insecticide]

Drift Language for Azinphos-methyl

(Source: Georgia Pest Mgt. Newsletter, Nov. 2003)

The EPA has approved drift language for azinphos-methyl products. In case you have forgotten the details, here are the crops lost and remaining for azinphos-methyl registrations.

These crops were deleted from the label: Alfalfa, beans, birdsfoot trefoil, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, citrus, clover, cucumbers, eggplant, filberts, grapes, melons, onions, pecans, peppers, plums & dried prunes, quince, spinach, strawberries, and tomatoes.

These crops will remain on the label until 2005: caneberries, cotton, cranberries, nectarines, peaches, potatoes, and **southern pine seed orchards**.

These crops will remain on the label indefinitely: almonds, apples & crabapples, blueberries, brussels sprouts, cherries, nursery stock, parsley, pears, pistachios, and walnuts.

The EPA approved the following language for azinphos-methyl. It is likely that that Agency will use this language as a template for other labels.

- "Do not apply under conditions where possible drift to unprotected persons or to food, forage, or other plantings that might be damaged or the crops thereof rendered unfit for sale, use or consumption can occur.
- Use the largest droplet size consistent with acceptable efficacy. Formation of very small droplets may be minimized by appropriate nozzle selection, by orienting nozzles away from the air stream as much as possible and by avoiding excessive spray boom pressure. For groundboom and aerial applications, use medium or coarser spray nozzles according to ASAE 572 definition for standard nozzles or a volume mean diameter (VMD) of 300 microns or greater for spinning atomizer nozzles.
- Make aerial or ground applications when the wind velocity favors on-target product deposition. Apply only when the wind speed is less than 10 mph. For all non-aerial applications, wind speed must be measured adjacent to the application site on the upwind-side, immediately prior to application.

Continued on Page 7

- Do not make aerial or ground applications into areas of temperature inversions. Inversions are characterized by stable air and increasing temperatures with increasing distance above the ground. Mist or fog may indicate the presence of an inversion in humid areas. Where permissible by local regulations, the applicator may detect the presence of an inversion by producing smoke and observing a smoke layer near the ground surface.
- Low humidity and high temperatures increase the evaporation rate of spray droplets and therefore the likelihood of increased spray drift. Avoid spraying during conditions of low humidity and/or high temperatures.
- All aerial and ground application equipment must be properly maintained and calibrated using appropriate carriers.
- For ground boom applications, apply with nozzle height no more than 4 feet above the ground or crop canopy.
- For airblast applications, turn off outward pointing nozzles at row ends and when spraying the outer two rows. To minimize spray loss over the top in orchard applications, spray must be directed into the canopy.
- For ground-boom, chemigation, orchard or other airblast applications, do not apply within 25 feet of permanent water bodies (rivers, natural ponds, lakes, streams, reservoirs, marshes, estuaries, or commercial fish ponds).
- For aerial application to potatoes, do not apply within 150 feet of permanent water bodies (aquatic buffer zone).
- For aerial application to crops other than potatoes, do not apply within 50 feet of permanent water bodies (aquatic buffer zone).
- For aerial applications, release spray at the lowest height consistent with efficacy and flight safety. If the application includes an aquatic buffer zone, do not release spray at a height greater than 10 feet above the ground or crop canopy.
- For aerial applications, the spray boom should be mounted on the aircraft so as to minimize drift caused by wing tip vortices. The minimum practical boom length should be used and must not exceed 75 percent of the wingspan or 90 percent of rotor blade diameter. Use upwind swath displacement."

Crickets on the March

(AP 6-13-03 and CropLife America 6-20-03 via Georgia Pest Mgt. Newsletter, Aug. 2003)

Up to 100,000,000,000 Mormon crickets were on the march in Nevada, Utah, and Idaho this summer. Mild winters and three years of drought provided ideal conditions for the insects, which hatch in the spring and feed through the summer. Experts say this year's infestation in Nevada, Utah, and Idaho was the worst in decades.

Mormon crickets (actually a katydid) will eat just about any plant in their path, including sagebrush, alfalfa, wheat, barley, clover, seeds, grasses, and vegetables. With one cricket per square yard, they can consume 38 pounds of forage per acre as they pass through an area. Mormon crickets do not fly, but they crawl and hop up to fifty miles before they lay eggs and die in the fall. Infestations typically last five to seven years. The states are battling the crickets with a carbaryl bait; the other crickets will eat their poisoned companions and also be killed.

A 1939 state publication noted an infestation when trains were unable to travel the main line of the Central Pacific Railroad because the rails were too slick with crushed crickets. In the 1930s, one county reported a band of crickets 12 miles long and several feet deep in some places. For some interesting pictures, search for "Mormon crickets" on the Web.

Note: At one time, these insects were an important food source for natives in the West. It is really too bad our attitudes have changed. After all, a battered, deep fried cricket is not that much different from a shrimp. With a little clever marketing, the plague of Mormon crickets would become a gold mine.

Tis the Season to Be Jolly

Recent Darwin Award Winners & Nominees

(Named in honor of Charles Darwin, the father of evolution, the Darwin Awards commemorate those who improve our gene pool by removing themselves from it. Below are a few stories that I thought foresters and entomologists could appreciate.

More stories can be found at www.darwinawards.com)

Fir Kills Tree Trimmer

(15 June 2002, England) A tree surgeon decided to save time, and throw the pruned branches directly into a fire he built near the base of the tree. Predictably, the tree caught fire, putting an end to his further time-saving innovations.

Continued on Page 6

Bees 1, Humans 0

(23 September 2002, Brazil) A farm keeper from São Paulo decided to remove a beehive from his orange tree. He didn't know exactly how to proceed, but he knew the hive should be burned, and he knew bees sting. So he protected his head with a plastic bag sealed tightly around his neck, grabbed a torch, and went off to fight the bees. His worried wife went to look for him a few hours later, and found him dead. However, it wasn't the bees that killed him. The plastic bag had protected him from smoke, stingers, and oxygen! He had forgotten to put breathing holes in the bag.

Return to Trees Fails

(18 February 2002, Hawaii) Millennia after an evolving human species descended from the trees, 30-year-old Joshua reversed the process, removing himself from the gene pool while perched in a tree. Joshua had hiked several miles onto a ranch and climbed a Koa tree under cover of darkness, intent upon stealing a branch of the expensive native hardwood. To his credit, he was smarter than a classic cartoon character, and didn't make the mistake of cutting the branch supporting him. However he was not smart enough to avoid cutting a branch directly above his head. The severed branch struck and killed him, and authorities found him still in the tree, twenty feet off the ground.

Cure for Lice

(August 2002, Texas) A Cosmetology School instructor was answering questions concerning the common problem of head lice, when she told the story of a woman who caught the little parasites while working at a day care center. After consulting with her mother and grandmother, the woman decided to stop by the local gas station instead of the local drug store. You see, an old wives tale holds that soaking one's hair and scalp in gasoline will kill the bugs. To some extent, it is true; however, lice are not the only creatures liable to suffer damage during this procedure. After soaking her head in gasoline, the woman was in the mood for a cigarette. So she carefully washed her hands, covered her hair with a towel, and stepped outside to light up (no pun intended.) Shortly thereafter, the day care worker was no more, although it may be safe to say that she had rid herself of head lice. *I do not know which is more disturbing: that this woman was so lacking in common sense as to douse her head in gasoline and light a cigarette, or that she was entrusted with several children's lives on a daily basis.*

The Worm Has Turned

(October 2002, Norway) It's a well-known fishing trick. Put 12V electrodes into the ground if you want worms to come to the surface. One 23-year-old Laagendalsposten man withdrew his genes from the pool when he tried to speed up the process. He figured that 220V, 50Hz, would bring more worms out faster, and he decided to test his theory. Alas, he did so squatting on a steel bucket, holding an electrode in one hand with the other in the ground a few feet. He seemed determined to enter the eternal fishing grounds. Quicker than spit, that wish was granted. Our Darwin winner leaves only parents -- and no offspring -- back by the earthly creek.

Chainsaw Slingshot

(2001, Michigan) A furious wind had knocked a susceptible tree limb across the electricity lines behind the house, and the line was bent into an alarming parabola. Our hero Joe, not intimidated by the thought of combining live wires, wet fallen branches, aluminum ladders, and chainsaws, decided to remove the limb from the wire himself. Enlisting the aid of a buddy, he balanced the ladder against the taut wire, climbed up, fired up the chainsaw, and carefully commenced cutting. Joe had almost managed to free the limb, and only one more cut was needed before the entire limb fell to the ground, releasing the wire. Those who watch Road Runner cartoons know what happens when a tight wire is released. The final cut was made, the limb fell, and to Joe's mystified dismay, the wire sprang back to its original position. The force lifted the ladder several feet into the air, along with its brave but surprised chainsaw-wielding occupant. The ladder slipped away, and Joe fell against the wire, knocking the chainsaw into his face, and missing his carotid artery by mere inches. Our bleeding Darwin Award nominee managed to throw the chainsaw away from himself, preventing further injury from that source, but no amount of arm flapping could postpone his inevitable encounter with the ground. Fortunately, Darwinian laws are not absolute, and Joe managed to survive with a only broken leg and some stitches. Hopefully, he was also left with the knowledge that what goes down must come up, and that some things that should be left to trained professionals -- even if you do own a ladder and a chainsaw.

The moral of these stories – THINK BEFORE YOU LEAP!
PEST wishes to you and yours for a safe and happy holiday season.

