



About PestLens

PestLens is an early-warning system supporting the efforts of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)-Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) to protect U.S. agriculture and natural resources against exotic plant pests. PestLens collects and distributes new information on exotic plant pests and provides a web-based platform for documenting safeguarding decisions and resulting actions.

A team of PestLens analysts with expertise in entomology, plant pathology, weed science, and technical communication systematically collects, evaluates, and summarizes relevant pest information, both from online sources and contributed by system users. When summarizing news items, the PestLens team places them into a plant health context and includes pertinent biological background information.

Weekly Notification

The summaries produced by the PestLens team are disseminated through a weekly e-mail notification. The notification is timely, concise, safeguarding-focused, and formatted for readability.

The types of information most commonly reported by PestLens are:

- 🌿 New distribution records
- 🌿 New host records
- 🌿 New pest descriptions/identifications
- 🌿 Significant outbreaks
- 🌿 Weed naturalization events
- 🌿 New pathogen/vector relationships
- 🌿 Research of regulatory or phytosanitary interest

PestLens does **not** report on:

- 🌿 Routine pest outbreaks
- 🌿 Pests that are not identified by name
- 🌿 Sources that are obviously unreliable or hearsay
- 🌿 Pest distribution changes within a country (excluding Mexico and Canada)

Sensitive information is not distributed in the weekly notification. However, it is made available through the PestLens web system to designated PPQ representatives for appropriate safeguarding action.

Designated Action Groups are tasked with deciding what actions should be taken in response to each PestLens article and recording the resulting decisions and actions in the PestLens web system. Action groups represent specific PPQ safeguarding functions (e.g., domestic pest surveys, regulations, risk assessments, pest databases).

Each action group has an action leader, who is responsible for recording decisions made by the action group and updating the progress and status of each resulting action. Action groups use their own internal decision-making processes, as well as their own guidelines and criteria, to determine which actions, if any, should be taken in response to each PestLens article.

The PestLens Web System provides:

- 🌿 A searchable archive of all PestLens articles
- 🌿 A mechanism for users to share information with the PestLens team
- 🌿 A venue for users to comment on PestLens articles, allowing them to contribute their expertise and insights toward good decision-making by the action groups
- 🌿 The decision and action history associated with each PestLens article
- 🌿 A variety of customizable summary reports, such as:
 - Articles by pest type or event category
 - Number and types of decisions made and actions taken by action groups
 - System use statistics and performance metrics to provide accountability

The PestLens web system is continually being refined to meet the needs of its users. User feedback is welcomed by the PestLens team.

To contact the PestLens team, visit the PestLens web site (<https://pestlens.info>) and click on “Contact Us” or send an e-mail to PestLens@aphis.usda.gov.

Development of PestLens

PestLens is the result of the merger of two previously existing PPQ systems—Exotic Pest Information Collection and Analysis (EPICA) and the Offshore Pest Information System (OPIS)—into a more streamlined, efficient, and user-friendly system. Archived OPIS and EPICA reports are accessible through the searchable database in the PestLens web system. While PestLens was developed for PPQ, its audience now extends beyond PPQ to a wide range of international plant protection officials.