

comment refers to Docket No. APHIS–2009–0001.

Reading Room: You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690–2817 before coming.

Other Information: Additional information about APHIS and its programs is available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information on the National Animal Health Reporting System, contact Ms. Sandra Warnken, Program and Management Analyst, Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health, VS, APHIS, 2150 Centre Avenue, Building B MS 2E6, Fort Collins, CO 80526; (970) 494–7193. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 851–2908.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: National Animal Health Reporting System.

OMB Number: 0579–0299.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: Under the Animal Health Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 8301 *et seq.*), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is authorized, among other things, to prohibit or restrict the importation and interstate movement of animals and other articles to prevent the introduction and interstate spread of livestock diseases and to eradicate such diseases from the United States when feasible. In connection with this mission, APHIS operates the National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS), which collects, on a national basis, data monthly from State veterinarians on the presence or absence of diseases of interest to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

As a member country of OIE, the United States must submit reports to the OIE on the status of certain diseases in specific livestock, poultry, and aquaculture species. Reportable diseases are diseases that have the potential for rapid spread, irrespective of national borders, that are of serious socio-economic or public health consequence, and that are of major importance in the international trade of animals and animal products. The potential benefits to trade of accurate reporting on the

health status of the U.S. commercial livestock, poultry, and aquaculture industries, include expansion of those industries into new export markets, and preservation of existing markets through increased confidence in quality and disease freedom. This data collection is unique in terms of the type, quantity, and frequency; no other entity is collecting and reporting data to the OIE on the health status of U.S. livestock, poultry, and aquaculture.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of this information collection activity for an additional 3 years.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the information collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the information collection on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies, *e.g.*, permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of Burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 4 hours per response.

Respondents: State veterinarians.

Estimated Annual Number of Respondents: 50.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: 12.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses: 600.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 2,400 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Done in Washington, DC, this 4th day of March 2009.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E9–5030 Filed 3–9–09; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS–2008–0137]

Notice of Request for Approval of an Information Collection; Plant Protection and Quarantine; Official Control Program

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request approval of an information collection associated with Federal recognition of a State's plant pest control or eradication program as an official control program.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before May 11, 2009.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0137> to submit or view comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically.

- **Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:** Please send two copies of your comment to Docket No. APHIS–2008–0137, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A–03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS–2008–0137.

Reading Room: You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690–2817 before coming.

Other Information: Additional information about APHIS and its

programs is available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information on the Official Control Program, contact Ms. Diane L. Schuble, National Coordinator for Official Control Programs, Emergency and Domestic Programs, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 26, Riverdale, MD 20737; (301) 734-8723. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 851-2908.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Plant Protection and Quarantine; Official Control Program.
OMB Number: 0579-XXXX.

Type of Request: Approval of an information collection.

Abstract: As authorized by the Plant Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 7701 *et seq.*), the Secretary of Agriculture may prohibit or restrict the importation, entry, exportation, or movement in interstate commerce of any plant, plant product, biological control organism, noxious weed, means of conveyance, or other article if the Secretary determines that the prohibition or restriction is necessary to prevent a plant pest or noxious weed from being introduced into or disseminated within the United States. This authority has been delegated to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

As part of this mission, APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program responds to introductions of plant pests to eradicate, suppress, or contain them through various programs to prevent the interstate spread of plant pests. APHIS' plant pest control and eradication programs qualify as "official control programs," as defined by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), recognized by the World Trade Organization as the standard-setting body for international plant quarantine issues. "Official control" is defined as "the active enforcement of mandatory phytosanitary regulations and the application of mandatory phytosanitary procedures with the objective of eradication or containment of quarantine pests or for the management of regulated non-quarantine pests." As a contracting party to the IPPC, the United States has agreed to observe IPPC principles as they relate to international trade.

APHIS is aware that individual States enforce phytosanitary regulations and procedures within their borders to address pests of concern, and that those pests are not always also the subject of

an APHIS response program or activity. To strengthen APHIS' safeguarding system to protect agriculture and to facilitate agriculture trade through effective management of phytosanitary measures, APHIS plans to begin a process to allow a State to request Federal recognition of that State's phytosanitary measures or activities as an "official control program" to restrict the spread of plant pests. Federal recognition of a State's pest control activities will justify actions by Federal inspectors at ports of entry to help exclude pests under an official control program in a destination State. This process involves the use of information collection activities, including the submission by States of a protocol for quarantine pests of concern and a protocol for regulated non-quarantine pests.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of these information collection activities for 3 years.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies; *e.g.*, permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 80 hours per response.

Respondents: State plant health regulatory officials.

Estimated annual number of respondents: 53.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 25.

Estimated annual number of responses: 1,325.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 106,000 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Done in Washington, DC, this 4th day of March 2009.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E9-5034 Filed 3-9-09; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2008-0143]

Availability of an Environmental Assessment for a Biological Control Agent for Russian Thistle

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has prepared an environmental assessment relative to the control of Russian thistle, *Salsola tragus*. The environmental assessment considers the effects of, and alternatives to, the release of a nonindigenous blister mite, *Aceria salsolae*, for the biological control of Russian thistle in the continental United States. We are making the environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before April 9, 2009.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0143> to submit or view comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically.

- *Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:* Please send two copies of your comment to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0143, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0143.

Reading Room: You may read any comments that we receive on the environmental assessment in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA