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Christmas Tree Growers Aren't Bugged by the Spotted Lanternfly

For Immediate Release, HARRISBURG, PA – The Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association (PCTGA), the state association which represents Christmas tree growers in Pennsylvania, says the hype of the Spotted Lanternfly shouldn't put a damper on the real tree being part of Christmas celebrations.

"Our growers in the 13-county quarantine area continue to work with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) and best practices calls for inspecting their trees," says PCTGA Executive Director Denise Calabrese, CAE. Further, she explains that growers receive regular training on all pests and diseases related to the industry.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Fred Strathmeyer concurs. "Pennsylvania's Christmas tree industry is a treasure to the commonwealth, and our growers take their commitment to consumer satisfaction and high-quality products seriously," said Strathmeyer. "Through regular scouting activities and the development of best management practices, the industry is proactively combatting Spotted Lanternfly and other invasive species."

According to Gregg Eshelman of Plow Farms in Berks County, "We haven't found Spotted Lanternfly egg masses on any of our trees. Based on our experience and that of other local growers, we also believe that conifers are not a preferred host." Eshelman, like other Christmas tree growers in the quarantine area, feel confident that they are armed with the knowledge and training to combat the fly. Both PDA and Penn State Extension have provided detailed information on how to recognize, report and destroy any flies or egg masses and a representative of PDA met with growers during PCTGA's summer meeting to provide information and training on this pest.

Tanner Delvalle, Penn State Extension educator, points out that Christmas Tree growers follow integrated pest management practices to minimize such threats. "If consumers are concerned, they are encouraged to inspect the tree prior to purchase. Spotted lanternfly egg masses are visible on the bark; and, if present, they can be easily removed," he said. "Although unlikely, if a spotted lanternfly egg were to hatch indoors, the nymph poses no threat to humans or animals, and will die quickly."

"We encourage all Christmas tree lovers to enjoy everything that a real tree adds to the season. It's a great family tradition and a way to support your local agricultural community. I know that it won't deter me from having a real tree in my home again this year," says Calabrese.

For detailed information on the Spotted Lanternfly, consumers can contact PDA at 1-888-4-BADFLY. For more information, contact the PCTGA office at 717-238-9765 or via e-mail at communications@christmastrees.org.

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Media representatives interested in visiting a tree farm for interviews and video opportunities can do so by contacting Michelle Keyser at PCTGA office by calling 717-238-9765 or via email to communications@christmastrees.org. For more information about the Spotted Lanternfly:

https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/plants_land_water/plantindustry/entomology/spotted_lanternfly/pages/default.aspx

<https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly>