

# Quarantine E-Newsletter

## Pests and Disease Diagnostic Training 7th – 11th November 2011

The completion of the NZ aid Pacific program for identification of Pests and Diseases proved successful as participants from various backgrounds completed their final training in pest and disease diagnostics. There were individuals from the Quarantine division, the Nuu Crops Research Station, Women in Business and the University of the South Pacific research.

There were four streams of week long workshops with the first workshop being held in April. The second was conducted in June, followed by a third training in August. The closing workshop was completed in November. All these four trainings were held at the Nuu Crops Research Station conference room.

The NZAID Pacific programme is the result of several years' work by a number of organisations in the Pacific and NZ. The overarching aim of the programme is to develop plant health diagnostic capability in the Pacific Island countries.

Developing diagnostic capability is a priority because diagnostics, or the ability to be able to identify pests and diseases, is an integral part of bio-security and trade-related activities. For example, it is important to be able to identify pests and diseases associated with commodities during quarantine inspections and export pre-clearance so that the appropriate bio-security decisions can be made. Likewise, knowing what pests and diseases are present (or absent) is important for developing pest lists, conducting pest risk analyses etc. .



*Participants of the training going through the manuals and discussions with facilitator Mrs. Megan Romberg.*

The objective of this training programme was to enhance key areas of diagnostic capability. The first of the key areas was around developing diagnostic tools and making these and other valuable resources available to the Pacific Island countries.

As a result of this project, diagnostic manuals, reference materials and other relevant literature, insect collection boxes, laboratory supplies, microscopes, and a remote microscopy unit were kindly donated to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Another vital resource that is being developed is a reference library of images for pests associated with imported and exported commodities. This virtual reference collection is made up of high quality diagnostic images uploaded into a web-based database called PaDIL (Pest & Disease Image Library), which can be readily accessed through the internet. This is a really useful tool and the workshop participants had the opportunity to use this during this weeks' workshop.

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The second critical component of the programme was staff capacity building. Selected participants underwent intensive training to identify pests and diseases and to develop their skills in plant health diagnostics.

Certificates were awarded to the participants during the closing ceremony. On addition, two participants from this group will receive two weeks of advance training in the MAF laboratory in NZ. Refresher training will also be conducted for a further week next year for all the participants who have completed this training.



## Red Fire Ant *NOW* Found in Guam

The Red Fire Ant is known to be one of Samoa's unwanted pests. The drastic and devastating impact the Red Imported Fire ant (RIFA) has on any country's economy, agricultural industry and public health could become difficult to prevent. As Samoa and the rest of the world are priming up to the festive season holidays, so are the number of people and various products coming in and out of Samoa.

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*The red imported fire ant (RIFA) is a small reddish brown ant from South America. They are highly aggressive. They inject a necrotising, alkaloid venom when they sting. The stings result in painful, itchy and persistent pustules, and sometimes cause severe allergic reactions.*



*A public health threat, a reaction of pustules from the RIFA stings*

Regional countries where the fire ant is also reported are Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.