

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q What is the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation?

A The Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation (ABWEF) is an Arkansas nonprofit corporation designated by the Arkansas State Plant Board (ASPB) under the authority of A.C.A. 2-16-612, to operate the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program (ABWEP). ASPB, which is a division of the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, oversees and regulates the operations of ABWEF.

ABWEF began its eradication operations in 1997 in southwest Arkansas counties, eventually expanding to include all cotton-producing areas in the state. The boll weevil was successfully and completely eradicated from Arkansas in 2008. Today, ABWEF continues a solely preventative maintenance program that monitors the state for bollweevil presence.

Q Does the Arkansas Department of Agriculture provide any oversight of the program?

A Yes. Under the authority of A.C.A. 2-16-612 the State Plant Board certifies the Boll Weevil Eradication Program. The State Plant Board also promulgates and enforces rules under which the program operates.

Q What is the legal framework of the program?

A The program is operated pursuant to the Arkansas Boll Weevil Suppression and Eradication Act at Ark. Code Ann. § 2-16-601. The Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation is the certified cotton growers' organization designated by the Arkansas State Plant Board to conduct the boll weevil eradication program.

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Are there any legal requirements the program must adhere to?

A

The Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation reports to the Arkansas State Plant Board and operates in accordance with the Arkansas Boll Weevil Suppression and Eradication Act and regulations of the Arkansas State Plant Board.

Q

How is the program organized?

A

The Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program operates across the 32 cotton-producing counties of the state. These counties are divided into five zones. Each zone is overseen by a zone manager, which reports to the program's executive director. The program's operations are overseen and directed by the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation Board of Directors.

Q

Who makes up the ABWEF's board of directors?

A

The Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation Board of Directors is made up of eight local cotton growers nominated by groups including the Arkansas Farm Bureau, the Arkansas Ag Council, and the Arkansas State Plant Board. The Governor uses these nominations to appoint members to the board. The cotton growers on the board represent the different boll weevil eradication zones in the state. Visit ABWEP.org to meet the current board members.

Q

How does this program benefit the general public?

A

A boll weevil infestation has the potential to ruin an entire cotton crop which would in turn create economic consequences for the local community in which the owner of the affected field operates. From an economic standpoint, this is why controlling the pest is so important to both farmers and their neighbors. When a cotton grower has a successful crop, it not only benefits them, but it contributes to the prosperity of the whole community and the surrounding communities as well.

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Q How is the program funded?

A Grower assessments fund the eradication and maintenance operations of the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program.

Q How much is the assessment per acre and when is it due?

A Producers are required to pay a \$3.00 assessment per acre planted in cotton. Payment of that assessment is due each year on or before August 15. Payments made after that date are assessed a late payment penalty.

Q What are the acreage reporting requirements of the program?

A Producers in Arkansas are mandated to report all cotton acres to the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program by June 15 each year and invoiced an annual assessment based on their total acreage. Acres not reported by June 15 are subject to a \$3 per acre nonreporting penalty.

Q How will the eradication program affect other cotton insects?

A Though the boll weevil is the most significant threat to cotton, there are a variety of pests that also contribute to the deterioration of the crop. Malathion is the primary pesticide used to control boll weevils. However, the use of this pesticide has residual impact on other pests, helping to manage the pressure of other insects in tandem with the control efforts targeting the boll weevil.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q What are the effects of the program on beneficial cotton insects?

A Malathion is harmful to other insects such as honeybees and some beneficial insects, so applications are monitored, and adjustments are made to minimize the effect on sensitive species that are beneficial or non-threatening to cotton production.

Q How is malathion applied?

A Malathion is applied to crops in a number of ways, but typically via aerial application and ground application in most cases. Helicopter applications are used when a crop is located near sites deemed sensitive, such as schools, churches, and beehives. In recent years, other state programs have integrated technological advancements to introduce drone applications for targeted spraying.

Q How much malathion is used?

A Industry standards recommend 10 oz. of malathion be used per acre for aerial application and 16 oz. for ground application.

Q What if I suspect that pesticides are being improperly applied?

A All “applicators” of restricted-use pesticides must be trained and licensed by the Arkansas State Plant Board in accordance with the Arkansas Pesticide Use And Application Act and Regulations. If you suspect or witness the improper use of pesticides, please contact the Plant Industries Division at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture

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Q What are the requirements relative to stalk destruction?

A Stalk destruction requirements fall under the Pink Bollworm Regulations, which state, “All cotton fields must be treated in a manner that will bury or destroy all cotton bolls and locks by April 15 of each year. All seed cotton storage areas, including handling and harvesting equipment, must be cleaned of all bolls and locks. Such bolls and locks must be treated in a manner that will either bury or destroy them. Any untreated seed cotton to be held over on farms must be fumigated under the supervision of the Plant Board.”

Q Why can't I treat my own fields for boll weevils?

A The rules and regulations for the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program prohibit the private treatment of boll weevils in the state, as outlined in Section VIII: Treatment of Boll Weevil in the Eradication Zones, which states, “The eradication of the Boll Weevil in an eradication zone shall be in accordance with the USDA National Boll Weevil Cooperative Control Program and shall be executed by the Plant Board and the Arkansas Cotton Grower’s Organization, Inc., with the assistance of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The Final Environmental Impact Statement, dated 1991, issued by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for the National Boll Weevil Cooperative Program is incorporated into these rules.

“The Arkansas Boll Weevil Suppression and Eradication Act declares the boll weevil a public nuisance, a pest and a menace to the cotton industry, and recognizes the interstate nature of boll weevil infestation. The Act establishes the legal basis for the Arkansas State Plant Board and the ABWEP to be responsible for boll weevil eradication in Arkansas and to cooperate with other state and federal governments to eradicate the boll weevil.”

Q Are there any boll weevils in Arkansas and if not, when was the last one confirmed?

A The last time the presence of a boll weevil was reported in Arkansas was in 2008.

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Q How does the eradication program work?

A The Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program consists of three components: mapping, trapping, and control. All cotton fields under the program's jurisdiction are mapped using GPS satellite mapping systems by a team of field supervisors.

The second and most important component to the program is trapping. Traps help locate and control the encroachment of weevil populations. Pheromone strips are used to attract weevils to the trap, which is then terminated by an insecticide strip inside the trap. Traps are spaced at a density of one mile around cotton fields. Not all fields will have a trap but are covered with the one-mile spacing. Since traps are the first line of defense in identifying and controlling weevil population, they are placed on a permanent structure where possible to ensure the longevity of the trap and the accuracy of information collected from the traps. Growers who help maintain traps placed in or near their fields when working near them contribute to the program's overall success.

Quality control is conducted weekly to ensure the accuracy of the trapping information collected. Means of quality control include visual inspection and spiked weevils. A random number of traps are visually inspected by the Fields Operations Supervisor or the Executive Director to ensure that traps are properly placed, inspected, and maintained in the zones. Spiked weevils are randomly placed by the executive director in each zone to ensure the zone supervisor is identifying and reporting weevils. Failure to identify and report spiked weevils results in disciplinary action and possible termination. Control is the third component to the program.

Control is the third component of the program. When weevils are identified and reported following the protocol set by the Technical Advisory Committee, the field in question is treated with an application of malathion. These treatments are applied with either ground applications or aerial applications, in which case airplanes are used. Helicopters are used occasionally for aerial applications if access to the area requiring treatment is considered difficult or near to a sensitive area.

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Q How long will this program be needed?

A While the boll weevil has been completely eradicated from the state of Arkansas since 2008, the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program is still needed to maintain a weevil-free environment. As long as there is a boll weevil presence in neighboring regions, such as the Lower Rio Grande Valley zone in Texas, and the Tamaulipas area in Mexico, there is still a threat that the boll weevil could return and spread across the US Cotton Belt once again.

Q What happens if the assessment is not paid?

A The grower will be assessed a late penalty of \$1 per acre if not paid by August 15 of that year. If the assessment is not paid by September 15, an additional \$1 per acre is assessed. If not paid by October 15, another \$1 per acre is assessed.

Q Am I subject to an assessment by the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program if I have planted only non-commercial cotton?

A That depends. First, you must be sure the cotton you have planted fits the Arkansas Plant Board's definition of non-commercial cotton. According to the State Plant Board, non-commercial cotton is described as "cotton intended for any purposes other than sale or scientific purposes under Section XII of the Rules and Regulations for the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program."

The Plant Board stipulates that non-commercial cotton (this includes ornamental cotton, which is not permitted anywhere in the state) shall not be planted in an eradication zone in which field operations of the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Program are in effect without a waiver issued in writing by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

To apply for a waiver, download the application at the bottom of the Info page on ABWEP.org, then complete and submit it back to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture for review. If you have a specific question about non-commercial cotton, contact the Arkansas Plant Board directly at 501-225-1598.