



COUNTY of VENTURA

Agriculture/Weights & Measures

Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer
Edmund E. Williams

Chief Deputy
Korinne M. Bell

Date: June 8, 2022

To: Nursery Owner/Operator

From: Ed Williams, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

Subject: Tropical Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*)

On June 01, 2022, the Ventura County Agricultural/Weights & Measures Office received notice from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) that tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) has been designated as a B-rated noxious weed. Under the authority of the Commissioner, tropical milkweed will no longer be allowed to be sold in any nursery or retail center in Ventura County.

Tropical milkweed is a non-native milkweed that is a host plant to a protozoan parasite of monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) called *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE). OE spores are carried on adult monarchs as they migrate. The dormant OE spores are then deposited on the leaves of the tropical milkweed. As the monarch caterpillars eat the plant, they ingest the OE spores and become infected. OE infections have been linked to lower migration success, reduction in body mass, lifespan, mating success, and flight ability. The western monarch has seen a population decline of >95% since the 1990s, which in part is due to OE.

The California Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) Section 5004 (Division 4) defines a “noxious weed” as any species of plant that is, or is liable to be troublesome, aggressive, intrusive, detrimental, or destructive to agriculture, silviculture, or important native species, and difficult to control or eradicate, which the director, by regulation, designates to be a noxious weed. In determining whether a species shall be designated a noxious weed for the purpose of protecting silviculture or important native plant species, the director shall not make that designation if the designation will be detrimental to agriculture.

California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 4500 (Title 3, Division 4, Chapter 6, Subchapter 6) lists noxious weeds as defined by FAC Section 5004.

Noxious weeds are prohibited from being produced, held, or offered for sale as nursery stock in California as outlined in CCR Section 3060.3. Noxious weeds listed in CCR 4500, that are being produced, held, or offered for sale as nursery stock will be rejected and destroyed under the authority of CCR 3060.4.

Please be advised that as of June 01, 2022, the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner will be enforcing these regulations. If tropical milkweed is found, you will be asked to remove the plants from sale; the plants may be rejected and destroyed. If you have any questions please contact Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, Greta Varien at (805) 933-2926 or greta.varien@ventura.org.