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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE PROGRAM.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that *Oryctes rhinoceros*,  
2 or the coconut rhinoceros beetle, can have devastating impacts  
3 on palm species that are foundational to the State's  
4 agricultural economy, cultural heritage, and ecosystems. Native  
5 to Southeast Asia, adult coconut rhinoceros beetles feed on  
6 emerging palm fronds, causing damage that can often be severe  
7 enough to kill the plant. The coconut rhinoceros beetle was  
8 first detected in the State in 2013 and is now established on  
9 Oahu, with smaller infestations on the windward side of Kauai,  
10 Waikoloa village on Hawaii island, and throughout the State.

11       The legislature further finds that the coconut rhinoceros  
12 beetle response program is a coordinated partnership among the  
13 university of Hawaii, United States Department of Agriculture,  
14 Hawaii department of agriculture, and other key organizations.  
15 At the university of Hawaii at Manoa lab, the program  
16 investigates new control methods and best practices, and a data  
17 team analyzes information from traps, mulch surveys, and tree



1 damage. An outreach team also provides information to the  
2 public and professionals while supporting community response  
3 efforts. While the expertise and methodology developed were not  
4 available at the start of the infestation on Oahu, they can now  
5 be deployed to prevent infestations on islands that are not yet  
6 infested. For infested areas, the program currently educates  
7 arborists and tree trimmers to protect trees with contact  
8 pesticides.

9       Additionally, the program is working on a long-term  
10 solution through biocontrol, which has been found to be  
11 effective in other parts of the world. The program is also  
12 working on permitting to bring in agents and hopes to host range  
13 studies in early 2026. Researchers have a rearing colony of  
14 coconut rhinoceros beetles at the university and need to test  
15 whether the viral strains that kill the beetles affect any  
16 native species. Once an appropriate strain is identified, it  
17 could be released on infected beetles to spread and suppress the  
18 population in the wild.

19       The legislature also finds that emergency response funding  
20 from the United States Department of Agriculture is ending, as  
21 it is no longer considered an emergency after more than ten



1 years. Stable year-to-year funding to the university of Hawaii  
2 to support key positions within the core coconut rhinoceros  
3 beetle response program would assist in leveraging additional  
4 federal funds.

5 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 6 (1) Establish short-term management initiatives for the  
7 coconut rhinoceros beetle response program; and  
8 (2) Appropriate funds to support the coconut rhinoceros  
9 beetle response program's activities and positions.

10 SECTION 2. In its coconut rhinoceros beetle response, the  
11 university of Hawaii shall incorporate the following short-term  
12 management initiatives:

- 13 (1) Engagement with tree trimmers, arborists, and the  
14 landscaping industry by educating them on the current  
15 best management practices and combating the  
16 misinformation circulating about coconut rhinoceros  
17 beetle treatment options; provided that annual  
18 workshops shall be held on each island; provided  
19 further that a list of companies that receive the  
20 training shall be posted online for use by consumers;



- 1           (2)   Subsidizing canopy treatments for residential palm  
2                   owners;
- 3           (3)   Extending services by the coconut rhinoceros beetle  
4                   response program to Hawaii island and the islands of  
5                   Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Lanai when coconut  
6                   rhinoceros beetles are detected;
- 7           (4)   Performing canine inspections, in coordination with  
8                   the department of agriculture, on high-risk cargo  
9                   moving between islands; and
- 10          (5)   Conducting research with an emphasis on biocontrol.

11          SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$            or so  
13 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
14 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
15 year 2026-2027 to be allocated as follows:

- 16          (1)   \$                   for training tree trimmers, arborists, and  
17                   the landscaping industry on the current best  
18                   management practices about coconut rhinoceros beetles;
- 19          (2)   \$                   for subsidizing canopy treatments for  
20                   residential palm owners;



- 1           (3)   \$                   for extending deployment of coconut  
2                   rhinoceros beetle response teams to Hawaii island and  
3                   the islands of Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Lanai when  
4                   coconut rhinoceros beetles are detected;
- 5           (4)   \$                   to perform canine inspections, in  
6                   coordination with the department of agriculture, for  
7                   coconut rhinoceros beetles for high-risk cargo moving  
8                   between islands;
- 9           (5)   \$                   for three drones for Hawaii island and the  
10                   islands of Maui and Kauai; and
- 11          (6)   \$                   for           full-time equivalent (       FTE)  
12                   permanent positions for biocontrol research,  
13                   including           technician and           graduate student  
14                   positions.

15           The sums appropriated shall be expended by the university  
16 of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

17           SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



**Report Title:**

Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle; Prevention; University of Hawaii;  
Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes short-term management initiatives for the coconut rhinoceros beetle response program. Appropriates funds for activities and positions related to coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation control. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

