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Survey Guidelines

Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS)

Fiscal Year 2026

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# INTRODUCTION

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) prepares survey guidelines every fiscal year in support of the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) program. This guidelines document, prepared in collaboration with the National CAPS Committee (NCC), provides direction to CAPS program cooperators for fiscal year (FY) 2026, in alignment with the CAPS program mission to conduct exotic plant pest surveys through a national network of cooperators and stakeholders to protect American agriculture and natural resources.

## National Priority Pest List

The 2026 [National Priority Pest List](https://approvedmethods.ceris.purdue.edu/2026) has 99 pests. PPQ added three new pests for the 2026 survey year: *Cacopsylla pyri* (European pear sucker), *Coniothyrium glycines* (red leaf blotch of soy), and *Candidatus* Phytoplasma aurantifolia (witches’ broom of lime), and did not remove any pests from the list. PPQ condensed 12 terrestrial snails and slugs listed on the 2025 priority pest list into three new pathway-based groupings for 2026 because they are not host specific. The new groupings represent pathways where shipping containers are moving, where plants are produced, and where earlier detections occurred. The pathways approach ensures appropriate microhabitats are visually inspected. See [Appendix 1](#APPENDIX_1) for a summary of changes to the national priority pest list for 2026. PPQ advises cooperators to work with their respective State CAPS Committee to identify survey targets.

## Survey Focus

CAPS surveys must target pests on the [National Priority Pest List](https://approvedmethods.ceris.purdue.edu/2026). Survey names must identify the pathway or crop/host as shown in [Appendix 2](#_APPENDIX_2._Approved). In each cooperator survey, a minimum of 60% of the pests must be National Priority Pests, and a maximum of 40% may be State Priority Pests (pests of state concern). For example, if a cooperator has 10 pests on a survey work plan, at least six pests must be from the National Priority Pest List, and the other four may be State Priority Pests.

Note: The minimum threshold for national priority pests in CAPS surveys will be increased from 60% to 70% or higher beginning in survey year 2027.

## Cooperator Bundle Pests

Cooperators can survey and identify pests that are not on the National Priority Pest List and that would not require CAPS funding or resources. Cooperators can add these pests to work plans without counting towards the 40% State Priority Pests (pests of state concern), and indicate on the Survey Summary Form that these are “Cooperator Bundle Pests” (formerly known as “no cost pests”).

For example: A state cooperator is conducting a cyst nematode survey for several national priority pests through collection of soil samples. These collected soil samples may have cyst nematode species that are of state concern that the state may want to have identified. The cooperator can include these cyst nematode species of state concern in the Survey Summary Form as “Cooperator Bundle Pests” if they do not require CAPS funding to: 1) collect the sample, 2) process the sample, and/or 3) identify the pests.

## Survey at High-Risk Sites

Surveys should focus on areas at the highest risk for pest introductions such as importer wholesale distribution sites, rail yards, warehouses, markets, and other shipping risk points (pathway approach). This approach supports early detection beyond the United States (U. S.) port of entry and before a pest reaches a potential establishment point. For example, moths listed in the Asian defoliator survey lay eggs on shipping containers and thus cooperators should target the containers for surveys. Locations that store shipping containers from Asia are potential high-risk areas for new pest introductions. State CAPS Committees should identify risk points where National Priority Pests may be present.

## Former Priority Pests

The [Former Priority Pest List](https://approvedmethods.ceris.purdue.edu/former-priority-pests) includes pests that PPQ removed from the National Priority Pest List. The list goes back to 2011 and links to the pest’s Approved Methods page. Cooperators can use this list to determine whether to include a former priority pest in a CAPS survey as a State Priority Pest. Note: PPQ does not update approved methods for former priority pests after their removal from the priority pest list and thus, any information provided may not be current.

## Public Engagement

The CAPS program encourages public engagement to amplify existing national-level messaging from PPQ and state-level campaigns for the purpose of raising awareness and garnering support from producers, industry groups, and the general public for early pest detection efforts. CAPS-funded public engagement activities should focus on:

1. National campaigns, such as Hungry Pests and Don’t Move Firewood
2. Existing statewide campaigns
3. National Priority Pests

CAPS agreements can fund the development of public engagement materials. When cooperators use CAPS funds to develop public engagement materials, such as banners, posters, or door hangers, they must load the electronic files for these materials into the [Public Engagement Library](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/public-engagement-library/), and record the hours devoted to material development in the accomplishment report.

## Host Matrix

The [Host Matrix](https://approvedmethods.ceris.purdue.edu/host-matrix) is a tool for building survey pest lists. It contains the priority pests cross-referenced by economically important hosts. The user can search the Host Matrix by pest or host. A search by pest results in a list of the major hosts of the pest, while a search by host reveals each pest that causes significant damage to the host. It is publicly available on the [CAPS Resource and Collaboration](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/) website as a searchable online table.

## National CAPS Committee

The CAPS program works with a [National CAPS Committee](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/ncc) (NCC) comprised of members from PPQ’s pest detection cross-functional working group (PD CFWG) and rotating state and federal members representing state plant regulatory officials (SPRO), state survey coordinators (SSC), PPQ state plant health directors (SPHD), and PPQ pest survey specialists (PSS). The NCC provides a conduit for cooperators to provide input to PPQ about the CAPS Program.

## State CAPS Committee

State-level CAPS committees determine and recommend survey priorities for their state. The SPHD leads the state-level CAPS committee, in collaboration with the SPRO and with input and support from the PSS and SSC. The SPHD and SPRO determine their committee’s membership and governance. Cooperators develop workplans based on the advice of their state CAPS committee and select pests from the National Priority Pest List that are important to their state and aligned with survey guidance. This collaboration allows flexibility on a state-by-state basis. Review the [NCC Roles and Responsibilities](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4432) of each core constituency (SPHD, SPRO, PSS, and SSC) and [Financial Plan Job Aid and Template](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2026_Financial_Plan_Template-1.docx) for more information.

# FUNDING AND WORK PLANS

## CAPS Agreement Funding Level

PPQ provides funds to state departments of agriculture, designated plant health regulatory authorities, tribes, or universities through cooperative agreements to support CAPS surveys and infrastructure. PPQ will determine the FY 2026 CAPS agreement amounts during the PPQ budget planning and funding allocation process after receiving its FY 2026 funding appropriation. PPQ will communicate to cooperators approved agreement amounts through their authorized departmental officer's designated representative (ADODR).

## Cooperative Agreement Funding Formula

The funding formula for CAPS agreements is *Infrastructure + Survey(s) = Total FY Federal Funds*. PPQ sets the maximum amount allowed for infrastructure agreements. Cooperators may accept less than the maximum infrastructure agreement amount to increase their survey funding; however, the sum of infrastructure and survey agreements may not exceed the total award amount.

For example, PPQ awards a cooperator a total of $100,000 for their CAPS agreement, and the maximum allowed for infrastructure is $70,000. The cooperator may:

* Use the full $70,000 in their infrastructure agreement, and the remaining $30,000 in their survey agreement:

*$70,000 infrastructure + $30,000 survey = $100,000 total FY 2026 award*

* Use less than the $70,000 in their infrastructure agreement and move funds to their survey agreement:

*$60,000 infrastructure + $40,000 survey = $100,000 total FY 2026 award*

* The cooperator **may not** exceed the infrastructure maximum by moving funds from survey to infrastructure, such as:

*$75,000 infrastructure +$25,000 survey = $100,000 total FY 2026 award*

## Infrastructure Agreement

The infrastructure agreement supports the SSC’s salary, fringe benefits, support equipment (such as phones or computers), travel, and departmental overhead typical for this position.

## Survey Agreement

The survey agreement documents, in detail, the activities to be conducted, and the roles and responsibilities of the agreement parties.

## Work and Financial Plan Submission

* FY 2026 work plans and financial plans require cooperators to use specific [templates.](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/guidelines/2026) Cooperators must enter financial plans into the [Online Work Plan Interface.](http://pest.ceris.purdue.edu/services/surveyplanning/) Details on how to complete these items are available on the [Work Plan Process for CAPS Surveys](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4609). The interface will open on **July 28, 2025**. Signed work plans are due to the PPQ Agreements SharePoint site by **September 5, 2025**.

## Agreement and Work Plan Formats

The NCC approved options for the CAPS agreement format. In FY 2026, cooperators may choose to submit: 1) two agreements, one for survey and one for infrastructure, **or** 2) a single agreement that includes both survey and infrastructure. The cooperator and their respective SPHD must agree to the agreement format before the cooperator completes and submits their work plan(s). Please note the single agreement format requires that infrastructure and survey start dates coincide. If they do not, you must use two agreements.

#### **Two Agreements Format (Separate Infrastructure and Survey Work Plans)**

For the two-agreements format, the cooperator must submit separate work plans for infrastructure and for survey(s). Regarding survey work plans, states may choose to combine their multiple CAPS surveys into one work and financial plan or may submit separate work plans for each survey. PPQ encourages the combined survey work and financial plan format if possible for a state to do so as it reduces administrative burdens for both parties. Whether a state pursues a combined survey work plan or individual survey work plans, the SSC must fill out each survey with accompanying target pests separately in the Survey Summary Form. This will aid in reporting program performance measures. Click on the link [Example of a Combined Survey Work Plan](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4611) to view an example.

#### **Single Agreement Format (Combined Infrastructure and Survey Work Plan)**

For the single agreement format, the cooperator must submit a single work plan that covers the infrastructure and survey(s) portions of the agreement, and identifies the SSC salary as a single line in the financial plan. Contact Pest Detection National Operations Manager (NOM) Darrell Bays, via email (darrell.a.bays@usda.gov) to request templates for the single agreement format.

## Out of State Travel

PPQ limits out of state travel for the SSC (or other state cooperator) to a total of $3,000 per year. The cooperator must record out of state travel in the infrastructure work plan and must use the funds for CAPS-specific meetings that the individual attends as the state CAPS representative, including the Regional Plant Board meeting. PPQ strongly encourages that travel to the Regional Plant Board Meeting be incorporated into the financial plan. SSCs should attend Regional Plant Board meetings as these now host CAPS breakout sessions. As has been the case since at least 2015, PPQ is not planning nor hosting a National CAPS meeting; do not include costs to attend a National CAPS meeting.

## In-State Travel

Cooperators should address in-state travel expenses for surveys in the survey work plan. PPQ does not allow travel expenses for surveys in the infrastructure funding. Cooperators must ensure that other in-state travel needs are clearly aligned with the CAPS mission.

## Supplies and Equipment

Cooperators making supply and equipment requests must demonstrate that these directly support CAPS survey work. Equipment requests, such as computer workstations and phone lines, should only support the SSC’s needs for surveys. Cooperators and PPQ should work together to balance needs and equipment replacement timeframes carefully. CAPS participants (federal and state) must be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

## Contractual Costs

Depending on the type of activity, the cooperator must describe some contractual items listed in the Financial Form in an additional Contractual Financial Plan. For clarification, the cooperator does not need to submit the separate Contractual Financial Plan if the cost is something simple like rent.. When one entity receives the funds and passes funds to another entity to perform all or a significant portion of the work, then the cooperator needs to submit the Contractual Financial Plan to document specific expenses. Click on the link [Financial Plan Job Aid and Template](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2026_Financial_Plan_Template-1.docx) for an example.

## Cooperator Cost Share

The CAPS program encourages states to leverage cost shares to enhance federal funding in the cooperative agreement. If a cooperator chooses to enter a cost share amount on the financial forms, then they must adhere to guidance governing that cost share, and the amount should match the SF-425 at the end of the agreement.

## Survey Supplies

PPQ will provide survey supplies (traps, lures, and accessories) for national priority pest surveys conducted through the CAPS program and/or the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program - Plant Protection Act (PPA), Section 7721, Goal 1 surveys. PPQ holds two supply ordering periods each year through its Integrated Plant Health Information System (IPHIS), one in the fall and one in the winter. The fall ordering period is for CAPS survey supplies, and the winter ordering period is for PPA 7721 Goal 1 survey supplies and any other remaining items needed for the survey season.

Survey supplies for non-priority pests are the cooperator’s responsibility. Do not place orders for non-priority pest survey supplies in the IPHIS ordering system.

The [CAPS Survey Supplies page](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/survey-supplies/) has additional information and guidance regarding supply ordering. Contact the Pest Detection NOM, Darrell Bays, via email (darrell.a.bays@usda.gov) for questions.

## Preliminary Identification

There is no guarantee that preliminary identification services will be available for all national priority pests. Therefore, it is the cooperator’s responsibility to confirm that arrangements for preliminary pest identification for national priority pests are in place before submitting their work plans. The cooperator must: 1) confirm that an identifier or institution that they have used previously will continue providing taxonomic support for the proposed target(s) each year; 2) cover preliminary identification of non-priority pests (pests of state concern); and 3) ensure that non-priority pests are not submitted along with national priority pest samples to the preliminary identification institutions. PPQ requires that preliminary identification institutions document and report the survey funding source for all samples they process. Cooperators must include survey funding source information (such as CAPS or PPA 7721) for all samples submitted for preliminary identification screening and/or sorting services.

Please contact the Preliminary Identification NOM for Pest Detection, Darrell Bays, via email (darrell.a.bays@usda.gov) if assistance is needed in finding an identifier or institution to provide preliminary identification for a target (**National** **Priority Pests only**) or for revising sample allotments. For other PPQ pest programs, reach out to the respective Pest Program NOM.

# OTHER GUIDANCE

## Domestic ARM Sample Routing for PPQ Confirmatory Identification

Specimens collected through CAPS survey that have received preliminary identification as a suspected pest of regulatory concern must be routed for confirmatory identification through the domestic module of the Agricultural Risk Management (ARM) system. For assistance with creating new specimen routing records in ARM, contact your state’s SPHD or the Pest Detection National Operations Manager, Darrell Bays (darrell.a.bays@usda.gov).

PPQ or its partner national specialists must confirm significant first specimen/sample detections to be officially recognized. When submitting the sample to PPQ for confirmatory identification using the ARM system, it is important that the submitter indicates if they think the sample may be a ‘range extension’ such as new in county, new in state, or new in the continental United States (CONUS). For more information, visit the [CAPS Procedures and Techniques page](http://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/procedures-techniques/).

## Endangered Species Act, Trapping, and Bycatch

[The Endangered Species Act (ESA)](https://www.fws.gov/endangered/laws-policies/) provides a program for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats in which they are found. PPQ advises the plant pest surveillance community to avoid trapping in the range of listed insect species to the extent possible. Report suspected or confirmed endangered species bycatch to the Pest Detection NOM via email at darrell.a.bays@usda.gov. Additional information and guidance regarding the ESA, insect trapping, and bycatch are available at the [CAPS Endangered Species Act, Trapping, and Bycatch page](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/esa/).

## Suggesting Targets for Objective Prioritization of Exotic Pests (OPEP) Evaluation

Anyone can nominate pests for addition to the National Priority Pest List. PPQ will use the OPEP process to evaluate pests and then evaluate survey and diagnostic feasibility. If the pest ranks high and has appropriate survey and diagnostic methods, PPQ may add it to the National Priority Pest List. Submit pests for consideration to: stcaps@usda.gov.

APHIS welcomes public feedback in support of the 2018 Farm Bill Section 12203(b) that includes maintaining the Animal and Plant Diseases and Pests of Concern list. If suggesting additions or changes, please provide references/documentation regarding how the pest/disease meets the definition of “likely to pose a significant risk to the food and agriculture critical infrastructure” in your submitted response. APHIS reviews the list of animal and plant pests and diseases of concern annually and updates the list as appropriate. Plant pests submitted to this review process may also be submitted for an OPEP evaluation and may be added to the National Priority Pest List if the criteria are met.

Send your suggestions for additions or changes to APHISPestDiseaseList@usda.gov.

# ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

PPQ Field Operations administers all CAPS cooperative agreements.

APHIS uses the ezFedGrants external web portal to process cooperative agreements, which cooperators can assess by entering ‘grants.fms.usda.gov’ into a web browser. The PPQ Agreements Staff will establish an opportunity to which cooperators will respond. PPQ will communicate this information to the cooperator as described in the ezFedGrants training.

The [ezFedGrants](https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/ezfedgrants) website has aids and training available.

As outlined in the Notice of Award between the cooperator and USDA APHIS PPQ, the cooperator’s designated representative must:

* Submit all required documents in accordance with the terms of the agreement. Use the standardized [Infrastructure Report Template](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4617) and [Survey Report Template](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4616) for all agreements as tools for reporting accomplishments.
* Certify and submit a semiannual **Accomplishment Report** on activities outlined in the work and financial plans to APHIS’ Authorized Representative.

The steps for processing cooperative agreements are:

1. The cooperator uploads the Federal Financial Report and Accomplishment Report to the ezFedGrants external portal homepage.
2. The ADODR is notified by the system that the cooperator has submitted an accomplishment report in the ezFedGrants system. Once approved by the ADODR, Field Operations will be notified that an accomplishment report has been submitted for review.
3. The ADODR compares the final Accomplishment Report against the [CAPS Accountability Report](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/accountability-report/) posted on the CAPS Resource & Collaboration website to ensure the Accountability Report matches the information in the Survey Summary Form. Also, the ADODR checks that the cooperator has entered data into the National Agriculture Pest Information System (NAPIS). NAPIS data entry is an indicator of the fulfillment of the cooperative agreement. If all requirements have been met, then the ADODR signs off the final accomplishment report.

PPQ may grant a one time, no cost extension of the cooperative agreement for up to one year if: 1) Requested in writing by the cooperator before the expiration date; 2) Supported by the Pest Detection NOM, ADODR, and PPQ Agreements Specialist; and 3) Approved by the PPQ Field Operations Associate Executive Director. Cooperators requesting an extension must provide an explanation or justification for the program’s delay and should not make a request to simply extend the agreement. PPQ will only consider programmatic reasons or extenuating circumstances (e.g., weather delays, problems in hiring of personnel, other reasons) when granting an extension. Reporting frequency of the accomplishment and financial reports, either quarterly or semiannually, will continue as noted in the Notice of Award.

The ADODR of the cooperative agreement must complete and submit the Closeout/Evaluation Report to the PPQ Agreements Specialist no later than the 90-day period allowed for submitting the reports. The evaluation should include input from the PSS and address each funded project in the cooperative agreement. The evaluation depends upon the work plan and must address the funding criteria previously agreed to by the cooperator and the ADODR and the cooperator’s performance in carrying out the goals of the agreement. The [Accountability Report](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/accountability-report), a work plan monitoring tool, is available to assist in the review of the cooperator’s performance. **Cooperators must log in to access these tools at the** [CAPS Resource & Collaboration](http://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/) website.

Please review the [Terms and Conditions for APHIS Awards](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/financial-management-division/financial_services_branch/agreements_service_center/terms-conditions-for-aphis-awards) for information about cooperative agreements.

# DATA MANAGEMENT

[NAPIS](https://napis.ceris.purdue.edu/home) is the final repository for all CAPS survey results. A system login is required and can be obtained from capsis@purdue.edu.

Information about data entry can be found in the following documents:

* [Data](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2026-Data-Entry-Roles-and-Responsibilities-1.docx) [Entry Roles and Responsibilities](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2026-Data-Entry-Roles-and-Responsibilities-1.docx)
* [Data Entry Guides for Selected Taxonomic Groups](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4004)

## Negative Data

The CAPS program has developed guidelines to assist in data entry of valid negative data. The CAPS program defines valid negative data for National Priority Pests as negative survey results using the pest’s approved method. The CAPS program defines valid negative data for pests of state concern as negative survey results using a method likely to find the pest. The document [Approved Methodology for Negative Data](https://download.ceris.purdue.edu/file/4615) helps cooperators determine pests that can be considered negative for a survey effort based on the survey methodology, trap/lure combination, or other factors. The NAPIS system will validate survey data entry with the approved survey method for each pest on the National Priority Pest List.

**The NAPIS system will not accept National Priority Pest survey data that does not conform to the approved survey method.**

The [Data Entry Guides for Selected Taxonomic Groups](https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/pest-surveillance-guidelines/data-entry-guides-selected-taxonomic-groups/2021) provides additional data entry guidance for selected target pests at the genus and species level. All positive records should be reported at the species level.

## APPENDIX 1. Summary of changes to the 2025 priority pest list for 2026

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scientific Name/Grouping | Common Name/Description | Status |
| *Cacopsylla pyri* | European pear sucker | Added |
| *Coniothyrium glycines* | Red leaf blotch of soy | Added |
| *Candidatus* Phytoplasma aurantifolia | Witches’ broom of lime | Added |
| *Cernuella virgata* | Maritime garden snail | Removed and combined\* |
| *Cochlicella* spp. | Cochlicellid snails | Removed and combined\* |
| *Belocaulus* spp. | Leatherleaf slugs | Removed and combined\* |
| *Cernuella* spp. | Hygromiid snails | Removed and combined\* |
| *Colosius* spp. | Leatherleaf slugs | Removed and combined\* |
| *Laevicaulis* spp. | Leatherleaf slugs | Removed and combined\* |
| *Lissachatina fulica* | Giant African snail | Removed and combined\* |
| *Meghimatium pictum* | Chinese slug | Removed and combined\* |
| *Monacha* spp. | Hygromiid snails | Removed and combined\* |
| *Sarasinula* spp. | Leatherleaf slugs | Removed and combined\* |
| *Semperula* spp. | Leatherleaf slugs | Removed and combined\* |
| *Veronicella* spp. | Leatherleaf slugs | Removed and combined\* |
| Terrestrial snails and slugs - *Shipping Containers* | Ports of entry, material warehouses, rail yards | Added |
| Terrestrial snails and slugs - *Plant Production* | Greenhouses, nurseries, produce/cut flower importer warehouses and markets | Added |
| Terrestrial snails and slugs - *Previous find(s)* | Incident-related sites with previously known find(s) | Added |

## APPENDIX 2. Approved Survey Names

These survey names should be used and be relevant to the host or pest targeted.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Survey Names |  |
| Asian Defoliator Survey | Nut Pest Survey |
| Berry Pest Survey | Oak Commodity Survey |
| Citrus Commodity Survey | Orchard Commodity Survey |
| Corn Commodity Survey | Palm Commodity Survey |
| Cotton Commodity Survey | Pathway Survey for Pests of Multiple Agricultural Systems |
| Cyst Nematode Survey | Pine Commodity Survey |
| Exotic Buprestid (Cerceris) Survey | Rice Pest Survey |
| Exotic Wood Borer/Bark Beetle Survey | Small Grains Commodity Survey |
| Field Crops Pest Survey | Solanaceous Commodity Survey |
| Forest Pest Survey | Soybean Commodity Survey |
| Fruit Crops Pest Survey | Specialty Crops Pest Survey |
| General Nematode Survey | Stone Fruit Commodity Survey |
| Grape Commodity Survey | Tree Fruit Pest Survey |
| Greenhouse Crops Pest Survey | Tree Nursery Pest Survey |
| Legume Pest Survey | Tropical Hosts Commodity Survey |
| Mollusk Survey | Vegetable Crops Pest Survey |
| Nursery and Ornamental Survey |  |