

Texas Department of Agriculture

Cotton Jassid Emergency Quarantine

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) adopts the establishment of an emergency quarantine pursuant to Texas Agriculture Code, Chapter 71, Subchapter A, Section 71.004, which authorizes the TDA to establish an emergency quarantine without notice and public hearing when a public emergency exists involving the likelihood of introduction or dissemination of a dangerous insect pest threatening horticulture and agriculture in the state. Earlier an emergency quarantine was filed on October 3, 2025, which expired on February 2, 2026. This emergency quarantine filing is required due to the effectiveness in restricting the spread of the two-spotted cotton leafhopper (also known as cotton jassid), *Amrasca biguttula*, to cotton fields and nurseries in Texas. Additional time is required for evaluating the effectiveness of integrated management practices to achieve an appropriate level of protection from *A. biguttula* risk to the state's cotton and nursery industries.

This invasive pest poses an imminent threat to Texas cotton production, a critical agricultural sector valued at over \$1.5 billion annually, due to its rapid reproduction and potential for "hopperburn" damage leading to yield losses up to 50% in infested fields. Additionally, the threat extends to other crops including ornamental and garden plants.

The department believes it is necessary to take an immediate timely action to prevent the artificial spread of two-spotted leafhopper to better plan and understand the pest dynamics and effects during the upcoming spring planting season. The establishment of this emergency quarantine on a temporary basis is both necessary and appropriate in order to effectively contain, combat and manage the infestations of two-spotted leafhopper. The Texas nursery floral and cotton industry producers' chances of becoming infested increase significantly without this emergency quarantine action. Once infested, producers would have to bear the treatment expenses to ship regulated articles to non-infested areas of Texas and other states.

Effective Date: This quarantine takes effect immediately upon issuance on February 5, 2026 and remains in force until rescinded or modified by TDA following assessment of pest distribution and control measures.

Pest Description:

The two-spotted cotton leafhopper (*Amrasca biguttula*) is a small (3-4 mm), pale green insect with yellowish-green wings marked by two distinct black spots on the head and forewings (spots may fade in older adults). Nymphs are wingless, pale green, and highly mobile. Adults and nymphs feed on plant sap from the undersides of leaves, injecting toxins that cause "hopperburn"—initial yellowing at leaf tips and margins, upward

curling/cupping of leaves, followed by rapid reddening, browning, and necrosis. Severe infestations lead to defoliation, stunted growth, and reduced boll set in cotton, mimicking nutrient deficiencies or spider mite damage. The pest has multiple generations per year (up to 20-30 in warm climates), with eggs laid in leaf tissues and a life cycle of 7-14 days under Texas summer conditions.

Regulated Articles: All living hostable field crops and nursery plants capable of disseminating the two-spotted cotton leafhopper are regulated.

Quarantined Areas: All counties in Texas with confirmed detections of the two-spotted cotton leafhopper as of September 1, 2025, based on current inspections and surveys. TDA will maintain an updated list of quarantined areas on the TDA Plant Quality website (texasagriculture.gov/Regulatory-Programs/Plant-Quality/Quarantines).

Movement into Texas from infested areas outside the state: Southeastern states including states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina is prohibited unless the following conditions for movement are met.

Conditions for Movement:

Certification: Accompanied by a phytosanitary document (certificate, permit or a compliance agreement) issued by an authorized official from the state/country of origin, confirming the articles are free of the pest based on inspection and treatment. The phytosanitary document must include origin, destination, commodity, treatment and pest-free declaration.

Treatment: Articles must be treated in accordance with TDA-approved methods or USDA approved treatments for leafhoppers, such as insecticidal dip or spray using EPA-registered products effective against leafhoppers.

Exemption: Shipments for scientific, research, or immediate processing purposes may be allowed with prior TDA and/or USDA approval and under containment protocols.

Movement violations are subject to Texas Agriculture Code penalties, including fines up to \$4,000 per violation, seizure, destruction of articles at owner's expense, and potential criminal charges.