

Alien caterpillars found on Oahu

June 8 2007

An invasive caterpillar with a nasty sting has turned up on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

The stinging nettle caterpillar first entered Hawaii through Hilo via an illegal shipment of seedlings from Taiwan in 2001, KITV-TV, Honolulu, reported.

The problem was brought under control around Hilo, but now the pest has jumped to Oahu, where it was discovered last week in a commercial nursery.

"If you rub against the caterpillar, it has a very strong burn (which) can burn for a few hours," said Neil Rheimer of the state Department of Agriculture.

The state is setting up traps at the nursery to attract the moths that lay eggs and spread the problem. The caterpillars were discovered on raphis palm trees after workers complained about being stung last week.

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