Leaflets News and Information for the Arborists of Michigan

EAB: "The Michigan Experience"

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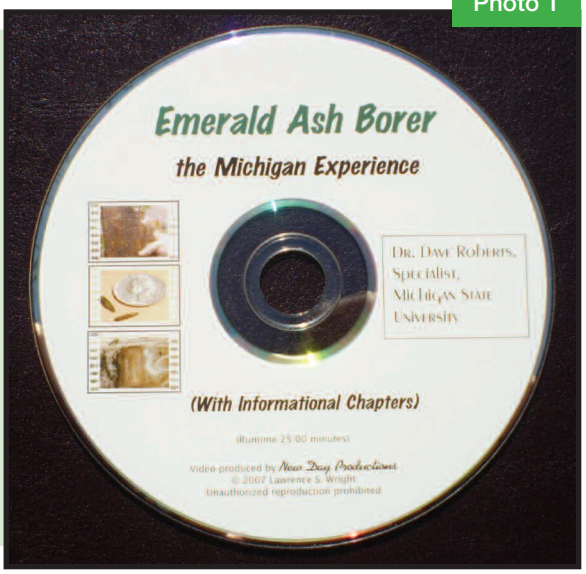
New EAB Video

During last summer and fall, I had the pleasure of developing a new video, entitled "Emerald Ash Borer: The Michigan Experience" (Photo 1). Many people might wonder why we need another EAB video; after all, there have been several videos about EAB already produced over the past several years. Recall that some of those videos produced in documentary form were highly critical of our Tree Care Industry for promoting alternatives to cutting and chipping trees. In fact, statements in some of these videos provided unreasonable slants against "costly," "ineffective treatments." Thousands of these videos were produced on government funds and distributed widely to libraries, schools, organizations, other states, etc.; regrettably, because of the widespread distribution to educational institutions, these videos will carry negative sentiments about EAB management for many years into the future. So, a rational, reasonable and up-to-date video is needed. Besides, my numerologist told me that a new video hosted by me would be a good thing.

Photo 1



A new video hosted by "yours truly" will hopefully dispel the myth in other states-that cut and chip is the only mechanism of Emerald Ash Borer management.

Continued on page 22

Photo 2

Wayne White, owner of Emerald Tree Care, L.L.C., successfully treats many ash trees at the Oakland County International Airport as well as many other locations.

EAB: "The Michigan Experience"

Continued from page 21

During a recent visit to the Chicago and Milwaukee areas to give some lectures on the EAB, it soon became apparent why we needed another video. During my lectures, I received many interesting and delving questions into the EAB particularly in regards to management and eradication efforts. After my first lecture, an arborist approached me and expressed his gratitude for the information I relayed to the audience. He further informed me that he hesitated coming to my lecture because he thought that it would be just another "boring" EAB lecture. He queried me as to why the information I conveyed isn't being distributed by universities and government agencies in Illinois and Indiana. The "information" he referred to in particular was our successful treatments to save ash trees in Michigan (Photo 2). Apparently, the media blitz in other states promotes the notion that ash trees cannot be saved, similar to Michigan's philosophy back in 2002-2005 (Photo 3). Other "information" that seemed to be important to these individuals was that chipping does not necessarily kill the EAB and that the widely used trap tree detection method is not always reliable. I received many positive comments from other attendees who also voiced frustration with not being able to obtain verifiable and balanced information. In fact, many people related that they receive so much conflicting information that they do not know who and what to believe. These people seemed to be greatly relieved with the information I presented, and I felt the trip was very worthwhile.

Whether the plant health care industry people in other states will be able to save ash trees depends largely on the programs and attitudes adopted by universities and state and local governments in those states. Obviously, there are insufficient funds from national sources and from local sources to maintain a cut and chip eradication strategy for very long. It is interesting to note that many people from other states literally believe that Fraxinus species are now extinct in Michigan and that there are no controls for the EAB, except to cut down trees and chip them. Sound familiar? The new video hopefully dispels some of the confusion regarding the EAB and should be pertinent for other states as the EAB infests new regions for decades to come. The video may even be important for regions of Michigan where the EAB has not yet attained a strong presence. If you'd care to see the video, please visit www.treeresearch.org. Also, if you like a free copy, contact me at robertsd@msu.edu.

Wasps: New Hope for EAB Management?

There has been a flurry of activity in the press regarding the management of the EAB through biological means, namely, the use of predators, parasites and diseases. In particular, parasitic wasps have become headline news over the past several months. It may be recalled that some of us were asked about our views on the possibility of introducing a couple species of wasps from China. Many of us are concerned about introducing new insects from other continents for the very same reasons that we should be concerned about any new invasive life-form whether they are plants, pests or diseases. Without long term environmental impact studies, we simply cannot predict what positive, neutral and negative effects introduced beings may have on our environment. Even with long term impact studies, we could be wrong. Nevertheless, some scientists have been eager to expedite these introductions without long term studies. This is alarming to many people.

More recently, some scientists revealed that a native wasp was attacking EAB and resulting in drastic population reduction. This revelation resulted in sensationalism-style headlines. In reality, we already witnessed native wasps attacking the EAB approximately five years ago. The "hope" that these news releases promise may be misleading. The "hope" may garner more research

Photo 3

A view that many other communities face in the near future as the Emerald Ash Borer advances across North America. Because of successful treatments, communities do not need to be devastated as those communities in southeast Michigan have been.

funds for some scientists, but these biological controls rarely perform as desired.

We must remember several important factors. First, the EAB is an introduced (invasive), highly destructive and lethal insect on ash trees native to North America. Second, it is highly unlikely that any parasite, predator (including woodpeckers) or disease, or combinations thereof, will eradicate the EAB from North America. Third, it is unlikely that these wasps and other parasites and predators are solely keeping Agrilus planipennis (EAB) in check in Asia. From some entomologists' points of view, all we have to do is import biological controls from China and/or encourage native biological controls to attack the EAB, which will be diminished to an insect of little importance. It is highly unlikely, unfortunately, that these natural controls will manage the EAB sufficiently to preclude the need for treatment of ash in North America.

It has already been demonstrated that Asian Fraxinus species are resistant to, or at least more tolerant of, the EAB. This resistance is probably the product of 1000's of years of evolution (that dirty word!) resulting in balanced co-existence between the Agrilus planipennis and native ashes in Asia. The natural resistance of Asian ash trees is more likely to be the reason why the EAB is not reaching wildly epidemic proportions in Asia when compared to North America.

New Chemical: New Hope?

There are many effective management techniques that have been demonstrated in field trials to provide highly efficacious management of the EAB. The delivery techniques include sprays, trunk injections and soil treatments. Even with these already proven and highly effective treatments, some scientists are now emphasizing an older product with a new use that will provide "100% control." This "new" product is known as Emamectin Benzoate, A.K.A Avermectin and Abamectin or derivatives thereof and has been used for control of Lepidoptera in agriculture since 1989. Registration is being vigorously pursued by Arborjet, Inc. and should be available for other delivery methods as well. A potential misleading promotion of this product is that it is far better than other products and offers new hope. This hope, not to be confused with Barrack Obama's hope, is so earnest that some scientists and promoters may leave the public wondering whether, intentional or not, other products were ever effective in combating the EAB. I have been very concerned about the limited chemistry (primarily imidacloprid) on which we've been predominantly focusing our EAB management program, so, new chemistry is always very welcome. We need as many options as possible to confront the lethal EAB. However, let's not forget, and possibly mislead the public, that we easily attain 100% control with any chemical, in its various trade names, formulations and delivery methods.

If you have comments about this article or the video, please do not hesitate to contact me at robertsd@msu.edu.