



## Hamilton Helps Wisconsin Farmers Export Pest-free Crops

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**Editor's Note: This is part of a series of feature stories highlighting DATCP programs and the people who work with them.** Contact: Nkauj (pronounced 'gow') Vang, 608-224-4591, [kaui.vang@wisconsin.gov](mailto:kaui.vang@wisconsin.gov) or Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020 [jim.dick@wi.gov](mailto:jim.dick@wi.gov)

MADISON – On long summer days, Krista Hamilton can be found in field crops, investigating damage caused by insects.

Hamilton, the entomologist at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for 13 years, works in the Wisconsin Pest Survey Program where she coordinates surveys of economically important agricultural insects to help Wisconsin farmers anticipate and minimize crop losses.

"My work is all about plant protection, helping farmers grow crops free of pest problems and ensuring we're not exporting pests when plants leave Wisconsin for other states or countries," Hamilton said.

The Pest Survey Program is unique for its consistent, large-scale surveys in Wisconsin field crops since 1915. Survey information collected by the program provides a basis for control measures to prevent the spread of detrimental pests and for the issuance of phytosanitary certificates, directly supporting the export of Wisconsin agricultural products to international markets. Such a longstanding and successful program plays a key role in strengthening the state's record high agricultural exports.

"Pest surveys maintain and substantiate claims of pest-free status of an area. This information is required to certify crops and commodities, such as small grains and seed corn, for domestic and export trade," Hamilton said.

Hamilton also writes and manages the "Wisconsin Pest Bulletin," a six- to seven-page weekly publication issued during the growing season that reports current pest conditions, early warnings to pest outbreaks and weather-based insect forecasts. Pests reported are not limited to insects, but also include plant diseases, mites, nematodes and more.

"It's an enormous time commitment, but vital to getting timely survey results out to Wisconsin growers," Hamilton said.

Additionally, Hamilton identifies insect samples and answers insect questions sent in from the public, receiving queries on everything from multicolored Asian lady beetles to winter cutworm larvae.

Hamilton's interest in insects started early. As a child, Hamilton loved collecting living things especially insects, amphibians and reptiles. She would spend afternoons combing the shores of the Wisconsin River for frogs and turtles and was also "very good at catching them."

Her true love for insects, however, was not fully realized until she attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Hamilton thought she would study biology until an entomology course changed everything.

"After assembling the required insect collection for the course, I knew working with bugs would be a part of my future," Hamilton said.



*Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Entomologist Krista Hamilton shows her collection of one of her favorite insects, the whitespotted sawyer beetle.*

Hamilton also enjoys the curatorial aspect of entomology, sitting for long hours, pinning and labeling collected insects. One of her favorites is the whitespotted sawyer, a black, shiny, long-antennaed beetle with white spots commonly found in northern Wisconsin in mid-summer.

"I once thought I'd like to be a curator of an insect research collection or insect museum, but I'd miss the fieldwork," Hamilton said. "My favorite summer days are those spent surveying fields in the Driftless Area of southwest and west-central Wisconsin."

Hamilton appreciates the varied nature of her work at DATCP as it demands a more balanced skill set, "much more than the ability to identify and count insects."

"I am very fortunate to call rural Wisconsin my office, so to speak, and it is gratifying to work for the benefit of Wisconsin farmers. I cannot think of a more rewarding profession to be in in one of the leading agricultural states in the U.S."

For help identifying an insect or questions about insects, call the Pest Hotline at 1-866-440-7523 or e-mail Hamilton at [krista.hamilton@wisconsin.gov](mailto:krista.hamilton@wisconsin.gov).

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