WSR 26-10-018
PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[Filed April 28, 2026, 10:05 a.m.]

Subject of Possible Rule Making: Chapter 16-470 WAC, Quarantine—Agricultural pests. The department of agriculture (department) is considering expanding the boundaries of the Japanese beetle internal quarantine in the southeastern corner of Yakima County and the southwestern corner of Benton County. The department is also considering expanding the quarantine to include additional areas of the state.

Additionally, the department is considering the following amendments related to WAC 16-470-710 and 16-470-715:

- Removing the requirement that growing media must be commercially packaged, and adding it to the regulated articles that are already exempt if commercially produced (which includes humus and compost).
- Adding that dip treatments are not permitted.
- Updating the URL for accessing a copy of the National Plant Board's U.S. Domestic Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan.

Statutes Authorizing the Agency to Adopt Rules on this Subject: RCW 17.24.011 and 17.24.041.

Reasons Why Rules on this Subject may be Needed and What They Might Accomplish: Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica* Newman) is a highly invasive plant pest native to Japan. It has been known to cause severe damage to more than 300 species of ornamental and agricultural plants, including roses, grapes, and hops. Adult beetles damage plants by skeletonizing foliage and feeding on buds, flowers, and fruit. The larvae also damage the roots of plants, such as turf grass. Although this feeding does not always kill the plant, it weakens it and may reduce the plant's overall yield.

In 2025, the department caught 68,242 Japanese beetles in the current internal quarantine area. Since 2021, the department has taken extensive measures to reduce the spread of Japanese beetle, with an ultimate goal of eradicating it. These measures include treating residential and public properties with insecticide, trapping, and establishing an internal quarantine. Despite these efforts, by the end of the 2024 trapping season and again in 2025, numerous Japanese beetles (which indicate a reproducing population) were caught outside of the currently established internal quarantine area and in other parts of the state. Due to this, expansion of the internal Japanese beetle quarantine [is necessary] to reflect the area of infestation more accurately and strengthen the quarantine's protections. Further, the department believes that the additional amendments under WAC 16-470-710 and 16-470-715 would better align exterior and interior quarantine language, as well as clarify requirements around growing media. These amendments are necessary to prevent the beetles' further dissemination within this state and to protect the state's forest, agricultural, horticultural, floricultural, beekeeping, and environmental interests.

If Japanese beetle becomes permanently established throughout the state, it could severely threaten several of Washington's agricultural industries. The threat this pest poses is particularly concerning due to the area in which the detections have occurred. There are a number of farms and nurseries in close proximity to the detection sites, growing plant species known to be targeted by Japanese beetle. Not only do these beetles pose a threat to the plants themselves, but if es-

tablished they have the potential to impact the availability of export markets for agricultural commodities grown in the area. Expanding the Japanese beetle internal quarantine and other proposed quarantine amendments will help prevent the spread of this invasive pest and protect Washington's agricultural industries, as well as maintain access to national and international markets.

Other Federal and State Agencies that Regulate this Subject and the Process Coordinating the Rule with These Agencies: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The department is following guidance found in the National Plant Board's Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan. This plan is signed by USDA and outlines requirements for preventing the interstate movement of Japanese beetle from infested states.

Process for Developing New Rule: Department staff will discuss any proposed amendments with affected stakeholder groups. Affected stakeholders will also have an opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed rules during the public comment period and will be able to present oral testimony at the public hearings.

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting Sven-Erik Spichiger, Pest Program Manager, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-280-6327, fax 360-902-2094, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email SSpichiger@agr.wa.gov, website https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking; or Alison Halpern, Assistant Director, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-742-7175, fax 360-902-2094, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email alison.halpern@agr.wa.gov, website https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking.

April 27, 2026
Alison Halpern
Assistant Director