

# APHIS-PPQ Ready for Another CHILEAN FRUIT SEASON

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) at the Port of Wilmington are busy inspecting imported fruit and produce for the big Chilean winter fruit season, which began in December. “The USDA-APHIS mission is to protect America’s animal and plant resources from invasive pests and diseases by monitoring and managing agricultural pests and diseases existing in the United States and imported through trade with foreign countries,” explained Colleen Kitzmiller, the USDA’s Delaware State Plant Health Director.

Port Illustrated met with Kitzmiller and Jennifer Lemly, the Port’s new USDA-APHIS Supervisory Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer to learn more about APHIS’s activities at the Port of Wilmington.

APHIS representatives in the U.S., as well as in foreign countries, supervise compliance with USDA regulations to insure safe and pest-free trade of animals and plants, including fruit imports and exports. The goal is to provide American consumers with a safe and affordable food supply, while protecting the local agricultural resources.

APHIS plant protection regulations determine whether imported fruits require inspection or fumigation prior to distribution to U.S. markets, according to the country of origin and the type of the imported fruit. For example, Dole Fresh Fruit and Chiquita

Fresh weekly shipments of Central American bananas require minimal random inspection of only 1%-2% of each container, while all other fruits imported by these companies from Central America are fully inspected. New Zealand fruits require neither inspection nor fumigation, due to an extensive USDA-APHIS inspection and pre-clearance program there.



USDA-PPQ staff at the Port of Wilmington are busy this winter insuring a pest-free Chilean fruit trade. In the photo (right to left) are USDA Delaware State Plant Health Director Colleen Kitzmiller and USDA APHIS Supervisory PPQ Officer Jennifer Lemly.

According to the USDA regulations, it is a mandatory requirement to fumigate or inspect all Chilean fruit imports entering the U.S. APHIS conducts inspection and oversees fumigation either at the Chilean ports or at the Port of Wilmington. Most of the Chilean fruit imported through the Port is inspected and pre-cleared by APHIS at the ports of origin. Early inspection, prior to entrance to the U.S., benefits the importers and shippers by facilitating a timely distribution and more temperature sensitive movement of the fruits thus resulting in a longer shelf life for the imported fruits.

Chilean table grapes are the only Chilean fruit that APHIS requires to be fumigated. Approximately 70% of the Chilean grapes imported through Wilmington are fumigated in Wilmington by Royal Fumigation.

Fumigation in the U.S., rather than in Chile, extends the fruit’s shelf life and contributes to a better distribution chain, therefore most of the fruit is fumigated in Wilmington upon arrival, with only small volumes fumigated at the ports of origin. For the 2002 Chilean fruit season, APHIS has approved an additional room in warehouse G for daytime fumigation in order to

improve the timely handling and clearance of shipments. Warehouse F will be used for night fumigation of large grape shipments, while the new space in warehouse G will be used year round for fumigation of smaller volumes of cargo. The space in warehouse G will be especially helpful during the winter fruit season to support a quick release of small shipments of fruit for distribution.

For further information, visit APHIS at [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq)