

PLANT HEALTH SPECIALIST 1

KIND OF WORK:

Entry-level professional work in plant pest survey and control, certification or regulatory programs.

NATURE AND PURPOSE:

Under general supervision, an employee in this class is responsible for performing inspections, surveys and investigations collecting data to make technical evaluations and decisions determining compliance with State laws, rules and regulations. Assignments may include the areas of nursery inspection, crop pest control, municipal pest control or plant pest survey and detection. The Plant Health Specialist 1 (PHS1) performs related work as required.

The PHS1 differs from the PHS2 in that the PHS2 provides leadwork and technical guidance to the PHS1 in one statewide pest control or regulatory program (e.g. nursery inspection, shade tree or ornamental pest survey and detection).

EXAMPLES OF WORK: (A position may not include all the work examples given, nor does the list include all that may be assigned).

Inspects nursery stock at dealer and grower locations and where special inspections are needed so that compliance with nursery law and certification is issued by checking grower and dealer premises and facilities for proper growing, storing, displaying and handling methods; examining and evaluating plants and approving or rejecting the plants for required certification; and determining the need for reinspections.

Provides technical assistance for nursery operators so that plant quality is maintained in compliance with the Plant Pest Act by disseminating information relating to the nursery laws, rules, and regulations; recommending changes in growing and handling procedures, storage, and sales areas, or other practices which will improve viability of plants; and giving specific recommendations for control of injurious pests consistent with approved guidelines.

Represents the department in matters associated with nursery inspection so that cooperators, the public, and industry are served by participating in meetings of the nursery industry, inspectors, and similar groups to exchange information; and assisting with educational exhibits and meetings of the department and cooperating agencies.

Coordinates and conducts surveys for barberry to eliminate rust susceptible plants near certified nursery stock growers so that grain producers and nursery stock growers are protected from crop and economic loss due to black stem rust by planning and executing surveys around nursery stock growers in infested counties; contacting property owners prior to surveys; eliminating susceptible barberry bushes when detected and establishing new properties to survey.

Plans and carries out and reports on field crop and pest surveys so that crop pest data is collected and available to the Department of Agriculture on a timely basis by preparing advance travel and work plans and surveying for plant pests (i.e. economic, parasitic, beneficial insect, plant disease, weed) in field crops and others as prescribed.

Collects and identifies new or relatively uncommon pests so that pest confirmations and controls are facilitated by collecting new or unusual organisms including insects, plant diseases, weeds, parasites and other.

Reports to the Department of Agriculture using computer, phone and in person field pest information so that the Department can alert farmers and agricultural clientele by reporting field data/observations immediately.

Develops and promotes Arbor Month/Day programs so that tree planting and care education/practices are encouraged and established by devising themes and assisting in the design and development of programs to promote arbor celebrations and education; coordinating planning, resources, and tasks among all cooperating agencies; establishing schedules and timetables for production and distribution of program material; assisting in the planning, promotion, and implementation of arbor celebrations; and developing and effectively utilizing news story reporting style in written communications.

Assists in Tree Inspector certification and implementation of community disease management programs so that sound tree care practices are established by assisting in workshop planning and implementation; preparing instructional materials and making arrangements for workshops; assisting with tree inspector certification program as needed; and conducting community visits to provide assistance and re-evaluating local programs (both shade tree and municipal pest) whenever possible.

Assists in implementing State/Federal efforts (i.e. regulatory action, technical support, public information, plant pest survey and eradication) so that municipal programs are in compliance with Minnesota Statutes by assisting in implementing Gypsy Moth Trapping Program, assisting in implementing gypsy moth egg mass surveys, and assisting in all aspects of a gypsy moth control/eradication effort.

Serves as Plant Health Specialist pest control recommendation liaison, survey, and wood utilization/recycling information coordinator by compiling, monitoring, and coordinating all related data from diagnostic lab form; planning by objective, designing, and conducting program surveys with the assistance of the program Information Officer, and monitoring and evaluating wood utilization/recycling technology; and developing and coordinating a Plant Health Specialist/Plant Protection materials management support system by assisting in organization, inventory, and evaluation of current display materials in cooperation with Information Officer, assisting in establishing a system of storage and retrieval of support/display materials by activity, devising and audio-visual inventory and check-out

system for the Division, developing computer assisted inventory/storage, materials use, and reporting system, and cross training all other program and/or division staff.

Assists communities so that the implementation of oak wilt control programs are established by promoting and coordinating oak wilt control at community/county/state levels; formulating model oak wilt control programs for use by neighborhoods, cities and counties; organizing field demonstrations and education workshops/seminars on oak wilt control techniques for tree inspectors, public officials and the general public; developing an oak wilt control handbook/field guide as an educational and reference guide for community tree managers; drafting model shade tree disease ordinances for use by communities in accordance with all applicable Minnesota laws; and responding promptly to inquiries from tree managers and the general public.

Provides education on oak wilt and its control so that public awareness is enhanced by drafting articles and press releases for radio broadcast/newspaper publication; attending and participating in public information meetings; and composing reviewing and updating materials for display and audio/visual presentations.

Assists in field releases and recovery of beneficial organisms so that required information is available to the Department of Agriculture and the farmer/grower by taking host censuses prior to beneficial organism releases; assessing effectiveness of releases; and developing alternative methods for improved effectiveness.

Collects parasites, pathogens and predators in the field so that they can be reared, mass produced and released experimentally by identifying parasites, pathogens and predators of economically important pests; assessing impact on selected hosts; and assisting in developing strategies for incorporating these organisms into the biological control program.

Trains and coordinates field and laboratory technicians so that biological control agents are surveyed, collected, reared and released by training the technicians to identify and collect biocontrol agents.

Assists in the development of appropriate visual materials, training manuals, publications and new procedures so that the inspection unit is in compliance with the appropriate standards and regulations by developing publication materials and new procedures; assisting in training workshops; and attending conferences, workshops, and appropriate training classes.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES REQUIRED:

Knowledge of:

Laws, rules, and regulations sufficient to be aware of constraints and to meet their objectives.

Plant pathology, entomology, agronomic crops, pest management practices as well as field crops, insects, plant diseases, parasites, and weeds sufficient to conduct surveys and investigations collecting various data.

Safe use of chemicals sufficient to advocate best management practices and to provide pest information to the public.

Standard field crop pest survey methods sufficient to ensure that various data is collected accurately and timely.

Ability to:

Deal appropriately with supervisors, co-workers, other Department employees, other government agencies' staff, special interest groups, nurseries, farmers, crop growers, and the general public in a variety of situations.

Communicate orally and in writing sufficient to write reports, provide information for individuals and groups in a clear and concise way, and to give clear directions to clientele.

Distinguish plant pests, diseases and physiological damage sufficient to be able to recommend the proper control or disposal methods to use.

Est.: 3-75

T.C.: Plant Health
Specialist

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Former Title(s):