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New Pest Alert – Exotic Bug Found in Orting Area, *Rhyparochromis* sp.

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Background / Situation

Specimens of a seed-bug (pictured here), submitted to WSDA by a homeowner in Orting (Pierce Co.) in mid-October, have been tentatively identified as a European species not previously found in North America.

A preliminary identification of the insect was provided by Dr. Tom Henry, entomologist with USDA ARS Systematic Entomology Lab, based on digital images of specimens sent by the Olympia Entomology lab. The species is tentatively identified as; *Rhyparochromis* (near *vulgaris*) (Hemiptera: Rhyparochromidae), one of numerous species in a European genus that is commonly associated with fallen seeds (generally referred to as Lygaeoid seed-bugs).

In recent years, this species has been intercepted (by USDA APHIS PPQ) in shipments of various goods from Europe, particularly Italy, and is native to continental Europe, as well as parts of Russia and Sweden. It is not considered a damaging plant pest, but can be a nuisance when occurring in large numbers, particularly in the fall, when adult bugs congregate and can be found indoors when seeking overwintering shelter. Two other similar species in this exotic genus have been found in recent years in California and Utah, where alarmingly high initial populations of those species declined in subsequent years (per Dr. Henry, SEL).

The Orting homeowner reported large numbers of the insect congregating in flowerbeds and under boards in late October, as well as finding their way into the house. The insects were first noticed in August, when large numbers of adult bugs were observed emerging from a commercial nursery hanging-basket, purchased locally in Orting. For more information contact: Eric LaGasa, WSDA Chief Entomologist, Olympia, desk phone - (360) 902-2063, or by email; elagasa@agr.wa.gov.