

## Imported Species

An imported species is any organism that is removed from one ecosystem and placed into a new ecosystem by humans—whether by accident or on purpose. These invasive species may negatively impact native species in any number of ways including: eating them, competing with them, mating with them, introducing disease and parasites that sicken or kill them, and disrupting available nutrients. An introduced species can change the look and makeup of an ecosystem, as well as decreasing rare species. Maintaining intact ecosystems is important to ensure the continuation of food, products and services upon which humans depend. (1) (5)

Invasive or alien plants can smother native vegetation or change the timing and severity of fires, floods, and other disturbances. Introduced diseases and parasites can attack and eliminate dominant native plant species. For example, the chestnut blight fungus from Asia all but wiped out the American Chestnut, thus changing the makeup of eastern forests. Intentionally and accidentally introduced herbivorous mammals, such as goats, rabbits, pigs, and horses, can threaten native (and often rare) plants by eating and trampling them. Often introduced herbivores diminish the quality of the habitat for native species, for example by transforming forests into grasslands. (10)

Some nonnative species have been deliberately introduced in the U.S.--nonnative plants, like kudzu, were introduced to control soil erosion; European birds were introduced to make colonists feel more at home. Unusual pets have escaped or were released by owners. It is estimated that more than 10,000 foreign species each day may hitch rides around the globe in the bottom of ships and airplanes. (15)

No matter how they get here, they are a problem that needs to be resolved. In some cases we have tried introducing another species to compete with or prey on the intruder. But that may cause more problems. In other cases, we have used certain pesticides or poisons to kill the introduced organism. We have even changed the nutrient or water supplies to favor the native species and give it a chance to out compete the imported organism. (20) (24)

### **Source:**

*To discuss how farm bill programs can better support species conservation: hearing before the Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation, and Rural Revitalization of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, United States Senate, One Hundred Ninth Congress, first session, July 26, 2005*  
By United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation, and Rural Revitalization, United States, Senate, Congress Contributor United States  
Published by U.S. G.P.O., 2006