



Alameda County Dog Team



The Community Development Agency's Agriculture Canine Inspection Team continues to intercept unmarked parcels containing agricultural commodities infested with harmful exotic pests that can damage our state's agricultural and natural environments. These parcels enter California through a variety of shipping terminals, several of which are located here in Alameda County.

Recently, Agricultural Biologist and Canine Handler Lisa Centoni, and her canine partner 'Cosmo', a black lab mix, intercepted a 13 lb. box of Florida origin *Annona squamosa* fruit (commonly known as 'sugar apples') at one of the terminals.

Cosmo 'alerted' and led Lisa right to the package on a top shelf in a loaded delivery truck, letting Lisa know that it contained an agricultural commodity. Cosmo 'alerts' by scratching on a package if he has direct access to it, or as in this case when the package is out of reach, by trying to reach the package by stretching towards it.

Senior Agricultural Biologist Ken Peek brought the box of sugar apples back to the Agriculture office for inspection since this fruit is prohibited into California from the State of Florida unless it is certified as meeting several quarantine regulations. Several insects were found infesting the fruit and were sent to the California Department of Agriculture's (CDFA) Plant Pest and Disease Diagnostic Lab in Sacramento for identification. Two 'A' rated pests were identified, both species of mealybugs; 'A' rated pests are economically damaging pests not found in California and are prohibited; consequently the package was rejected and destroyed.

Lisa and Cosmo began working together in California parcel facilities in January 2011 and are one of CDFA's newest dog teams. Currently there are 13 teams based in 11 Counties in the State. Cosmo was rescued from an animal shelter in Georgia by USDA canine trainers and both he and Lisa spent ten weeks in intensive training at the National Dog Detector Training Center in Newnan Georgia before returning home to Alameda County to begin their important work.

Do your part in protecting our agricultural industry in California by not transporting agricultural commodities in violation of agricultural laws and regulations.

If you have any questions regarding shipments of unprocessed agricultural commodities and plant materials, please contact the Alameda County Department of Agriculture at (510) 670-5232