

## **Mexico collaborates with the regional effort to eradicate the Giant African snail from Central America**

Sixteen canine pairings from seven countries received training to imprint the aroma of the Giant African snail in the olfactory memory of dogs.



To assist in the phytosanitary emergency with the control and eradication of the Giant African snail (*Achatina fulica*), trainers from the Canine School of the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA) coordinated the training of 16 canine pairings to imprint the aroma of the pest in the olfactory memory of the dogs that guard the entry points at Central American countries.

Due to the introduction of the Giant African snail to the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica on June of this year, the OIRSA (International and Regional Organization of Agriculture and Stockbreeding Health) declared a sanitary emergency for Central America in order to carry out coordinated actions aimed at controlling, eradicating, and preventing the dispersal of the pest to other countries of the region.

The training workshop, organized by personnel of the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development, took place in Costa Rica, from August 23-27, with the participation of two representatives of the host country and two representatives from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, respectively.

In attendance were four Mexican technicians who designed the protocol for the introduction of the aroma, and coordinated the training of the attendants, with the collaboration of the representatives from Panama as second trainers.

The dogs from the groups initially had difficulties due to the lack of climate adaptation; afterwards, the Mexican group introduced three aroma concentrations: high with two big snails, medium with one big snail, and small, with gauze soaked with the aroma of the snail.

The Giant African snail is not present in Mexico. It is considered one of the 100 most invasive pests for plants worldwide, since it feeds off 500 species, many of them of economic relevance: corn, cotton, broccoli, citruses, bean, papaya, cantaloupe, squash, carrot, banana and cocoa.

It can measure up to 30 cm in length and is highly reproductive. In a year it can lay over two thousand eggs, since it is hermaphroditic (both male and female reproductive organs).

Moreover, is a risk to animal and human health because it is a carrier of highly dangerous parasites, like *A. costaricensis* and *A. abdominalis*, which can cause the death of the hosts.

Currently, the member countries of OIRSA are in alert due to the presence of the pest in the Dominican Republic (since 2016) and in Costa Rica, since the current year.

The Mexican delegation in charge of training was headed by César Dangú Guillén director of the SENASICA's Canine School (located in Tecamac, State of Mexico), and Vladimir Ortiz Vallejo, liaison of the school, accompanied by the sanitary inspection officers Nancy Marrufo Martínez, who works in the International Airport of Cancun, Quintana Roo, and Omar Montes de Oca, who works in the International Airport of Mexico City.

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