



Rep. Christina Sappey's E-News

2025

October 14, 2025

As a refresher, the PA Dept of Agriculture issued a quarantine order for mushroom farms in the Kennett area earlier this year. This order means that all area mushroom growers are required to steam-treat mushroom houses and spent growing medium between crops. This treatment kills adult flies and larvae, preventing spread to adjacent farms and homes. Steaming off mushroom houses is an industry-proven, effective practice for managing the spread of phorid flies.

Additionally, at my request, funding was made available by the department to farms with fewer resources to help them comply with department best practice management. Applications for this funding are being accepted and processed by the Chester County Conservation District. To date there have been 12 applicants for this funding. 35 mushroom houses have installed new spray foam insulation, 30 houses have installed new doors and door seals, and 4 steam boilers have been purchased or repaired.

The PA Department of Agriculture is inspecting farms for compliance with the quarantine order and monitoring progress.

Encouraging updates are coming in now from Penn State and a European company called Vesterguard, who manufacturers treated netting, called AgriScreen 3.0, and is much like netting used for Malaria. This netting is meant to go around the windows and doors of mushroom growing rooms. According to the manufacturer, 19-20 farms (which is 450-500 mushroom houses) are currently using the netting and seeing strong results.

Penn State's multi-pronged mitigation strategy will continue which includes the use of predatory mites and nematodes to kill phorid fly larva. This ongoing research has shown consistent positive results.

I have paid close attention to the issue of phorid flies over the last 7 years, and I understand how challenging this issue is for residents. Earlier this year, I proposed legislation to create a permanent grant funding mechanism for smaller mushroom farm operations to assist with, and to ensure compliance with, the state's indoor agriculture best management practice. This funding would enable these smaller operations to afford necessary equipment and other means to meet compliance guidelines, and would be subject to the annual state budget.

If you are new to the area and have questions regarding the phorid fly situation, you can stay up to date by going to my website and clicking on the phorid fly tab. This page provides the background, resources and current updates. You are also welcome to contact my office. My staff and I are always here for you and your questions.

July 17, 2025:

For those residing in the southern end of the district, I am pleased to let you know that steady, positive progress is being made with phorid fly mitigation efforts.

Penn State has worked collaboratively with the PA Department of Agriculture, American Mushroom Institute (AMI) and a private manufacturer to secure an Emergency Exemption from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a specific netting product containing a long-lasting insecticide for industry use in mushroom houses. The Emergency Exemption for the product, called AgriScreen 3.0, will be in effect through January 31, 2026, and at that time stakeholders will petition for another exemption if needed. The netting, used around windows and facility openings, will be used to supplement Penn State's multipronged mitigation strategy which includes the use of predatory mites and nematodes to kill phorid fly larva.

Earlier this year, the PA Dept. of Agriculture made available a total of \$500,000 in grants to help famers comply with their agricultural quarantine order requiring mushroom farms to adhere to a mandatory steaming off treatment of mushroom houses following completion of the mushroom growth cycle. The Chester County Conservation District administers the grant program, while the PA Dept. of Agriculture enforces compliance with the agricultural quarantine order.

In addition, I have proposed legislation to create a permanent grant funding mechanism for smaller mushroom farm operations to assist with, and better ensure, the state's indoor agriculture best practice management. This funding would enable these smaller operations to afford necessary equipment and other means to meet compliance guidelines.

I am pleased with the collaborative progress being made by Penn State, state and local governments, AMI and our mushroom growers, and I will continue to provide updates to you.

February 5, 2025:

This might not sound familiar if you live in parts of the 158th that are not around Kennett Square, or if you are new to our area, these flies might be a total mystery; however, they have negatively impacted residents in southern Chester County for years.

During my time in office, I have held public meetings, requested state funding, worked with residents, the mushroom industry, the PA Dept of Agriculture and Penn State University to find a solution to Phorid flies invading residential spaces, as currently there is no treatment that is approved for residential use. These flies, unique to the mushroom industry, migrate from mushroom farms to residential areas at the end of the mushroom growth cycle, to reproduce before dying. The flies pose no hazard to mushrooms, the farms or residents, but during the warmer than usual Fall, the number of flies in homes spiked markedly, causing tremendous stress and frustration to residents.

In November, Kennett Square Mayor, Matt Fetick, also held a public meeting, with a briefing from Dr. Michael Wolfen from Penn State. At this meeting, I promised to request increased research funding in the state budget, the creation of grant program for small mushroom farm operators lacking resources and I encouraged impacted municipalities to pass resolutions speaking to the dire need for state assistance. Armed with these resolutions from Kennett Township, New Garden Township and Kennett Square, I wrote to the Secretary of Agriculture requesting 1. Increased budget funding 2. The creation of the grant program and importantly, the update of state agricultural best practice management to include indoor agriculture, specifying Phorid mitigation, air quality and sustainability measures. In January, I also circulated a legislative sponsorship memo to my House colleagues calling for the creation of the grant program.

Last week, PA Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and the Shapiro administration responded to our calls for help, and issued a quarantine order for mushroom houses located in Kennett and New Garden Townships. An agricultural quarantine order is outlined in the PA Plant Pest Act as the vehicle for a treatment plan, so to be clear, there is no actual quarantining of farms or mushrooms. The Secretary's order requires farmers to adhere to a mandatory steaming off treatment of mushroom houses following completion of the mushroom growing cycle, which kills adult flies and their eggs. For smaller farms without means to pay for necessary equipment, the Dept. of Agriculture is making a total of \$500,000 in grants available to help them comply with the order. The Dept of Agriculture and the Chester County Conservation District will oversee compliance and assist small farms with the grant process, available in both Spanish and English.

I am grateful to the Governor and Secretary Redding for their attention to a problem which has seriously threatened property values, quality of life and the mental health of my constituents, as well as impacted an important industry for the state. I am pleased that a collaboration between local and state governments has generated real solutions which I hope will bring relief to all those impacted.

For more information, please go to my press release [Sappey responds to PA Department of Agriculture Phorid fly mitigation order for New Garden and Kennett townships](#).

January 8, 2025:

Many of our neighbors in the southern end of the 158th have been dealing with concerns related to Kennett area's mushroom industry for some time. The ongoing phorid fly issue impacts quality of life and requires extensive collaboration to create balanced solutions.

Unlike the spotted lantern fly or stink bug, Phorid flies are impossible to swat, squash or eradicate with traditional methods. At the end of the mushroom growth cycle, phorids leave farms, heading to residential areas to reproduce before dying. This is why attacking the problem at the original source, the farm, is the focus of Penn State research aimed at controlling the flies.

I was pleased last week to see this issue get the attention of the Philadelphia Inquirer, who reported on the [recent uptick](#) of phorid flies and what is being done to address it.

The phorid fly issue is not new. PA Department of Agriculture funded research began at Penn State almost a decade ago to ascertain why the flies had become so abundant, and what was leading them to migrate to residential areas. While the flies persist, progress has been made using biological and manufactured methods prescribed by this critical research. Unfortunately, possible supply chain issues caused the end of the manufactured pre-treated screens that had been used at farms, and warmer than usual temperatures this past fall led to this current spike in residential phorids.

So, what am I doing about this?

Over my term, I have held several in-person and online public meetings on phorids to hear from residents and to provide information updates. You can view the most recent informational meeting [here](#) to learn more about phorid flies and the research being done. Dr. Mike Wolfen of Penn State is the "Kornacki" of entomology and makes this topic understandable for regular people like us!

I advocate annually for an increase in this Dept of Ag research line item in our state budget. I am supporting Penn State's application with the US EPA for a residential use treatment that is currently approved for agricultural use only.

I recently attended a public meeting hosted by Kennett Square Mayor, Matt Fetick, where Dr. Wolfin of Penn State gave another overview and update. During the Q&A portion of this meeting, which was available to residents online, but not recorded, I agreed with a resident who suggested a grant program to incentivize best practice management for smaller mushroom operations experiencing financial difficulty employing preventative measures. I have spoken with the Department of Ag and we are working on development of such a program.

At the end of the Kennett Square meeting, I suggested to local officials in attendance that they propose resolutions highlighting the urgency of this situation at their next board meetings. Such resolutions are helpful with my advocacy in Harrisburg. To date, several have done this. It's important to note that these are not emergency declarations as some have suggested. Only the Governor and certain state agencies, such as the Department of Health, have the authority to order such a declaration.

I am also working with the Dept of Ag on updating the state agricultural best practice management guidelines to include indoor agriculture. Currently, indoor Ag is not included in the BPMs and it's clearly necessary.

My work on this issue will continue until we are done. The input from those impacted continues to be necessary, so please be in touch when you note changes.

2022

September 9, 2022:

Last week I was happy to share the PA Department of Agriculture's approval of state funding for Pennsylvania State University, a partner in the 158th Legislative District. Penn State was awarded \$126,718 to expand the use of new integrated pest management to control phorid flies in mushroom production.

April 22, 2022:

I look forward to joining panelists for Penn State Extension's virtual discussion on recent research and activities related to phorid flies' Integrated Pest Management (IPM) solutions for mushroom farms.

Mushroom phorid flies have adversely impacted residents and mushroom farms in Southern Chester County, Maryland and Delaware. Residents and business owners are invited to hear results from recent field experiments conducted by the Mushroom Fly Research Team, progress updates and discuss current and future projects."

To register for this event, please use the Penn State Extension link:
<https://extension.psu.edu/phorid-fly-research-and-extension-update>.