

WBR ARTICLE

Ag officials warn of grasshopper plague

By Brodie Farquhar

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CHEYENNE — Cue the scary music. Duh-dum, duh-dum, duh-dum...

You think the jaws of a great white shark are scary? Try a gajillion grasshoppers chewing through the agricultural fields of Wyoming this spring.

That's the threat, according to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. Hank Uhden, manager of technical services for the department, warned the Joint Appropriations Committee last week that conditions are right for a grasshopper population explosion – unless the state can pony up more money for emergency insect management.

The Agriculture Department is penciled in for \$2.5 million for insect management under Governor Dave Freudenthal's proposed budget, but that's targeted against mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus. The department leadership maintains they need more money to tackle the looming grasshopper problem.

The Joint Appropriations Committee is reviewing agency budgets prior to the Legislature's 20-day budget session that begins Feb. 8.