

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA



# Chestnut Blight Industry Update

Department of Economic Development Jobs  
Transport and Resources

# Chestnut Blight Update

February 2017

## Current Situation

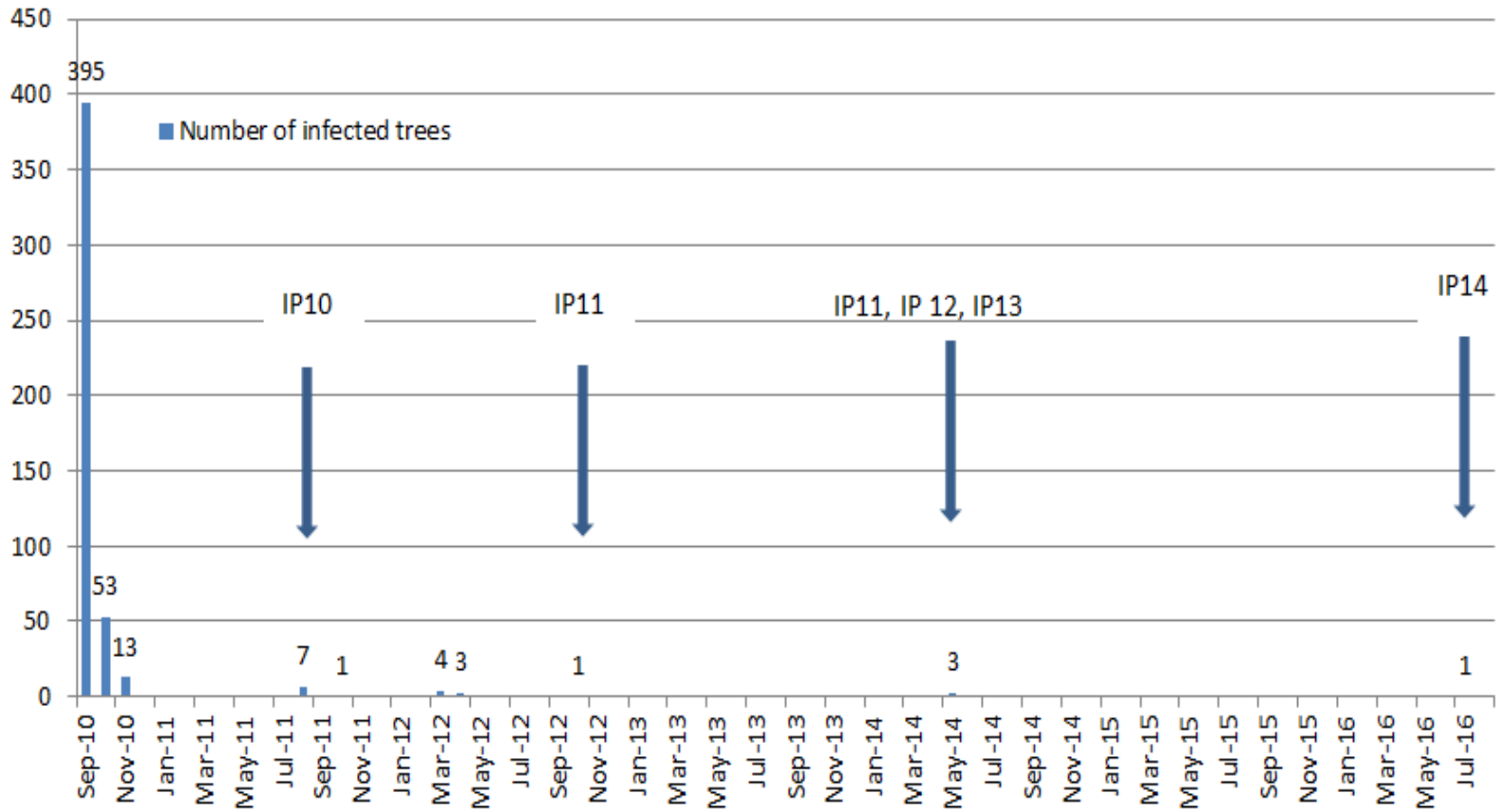
- Chestnut blight has been under eradication in north eastern Victoria as part of a national cost-shared eradication program led by Agriculture Victoria since November 2010.
- The last previous detections were in winter 2014 when three infected trees were found and destroyed.
- In July 2016 a vigilant grower contacted DEDJTR about a suspicious disease on his chestnut tree.
- The property was surveyed the previous May but symptoms were not found.
- Wet winter conditions may have encouraged development of symptoms.

- A small tree with a canker was sampled and found to be affected by chestnut blight by DNA sequencing. Sampling removed the entire affected section of the trunk.
- Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity Officers moved quickly to contain spread of the disease and destroyed all host trees within 10m of the infected tree. Nearby trees may have been infected from spores coming from the infected wood.
- To further minimise the risk of spread, infested lands notice was served on the grower, restricting movement of planting material and machinery from his property

# Trends in incidence of chestnut blight over time

- The eradication program has remained effective with 461 infected trees found in 2010, then only 7 in 2011 and 2012
- The current infected tree is the first case of the disease in two years. The last infections were in the Ovens Valley when three infected trees were found in 2014

## Number of chestnut blight infected trees to July 2016



- Given that only four infected trees have been found in the last four years, eradication of chestnut blight is still highly achievable.
- The latest sighting of the disease demonstrates the continued need to find every last infection.
- This is especially important as the disease may lie dormant in trees, waiting for the right conditions to emerge from the bark

- Agriculture Victoria is urging all chestnut growers in north east Victoria to thoroughly examine their trees for signs of chestnut blight and report any suspicious symptoms so the disease can be effectively eradicated.
- Report any suspicious chestnut cankers to Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity Officer, Stu Robertson, (02) 6043 7900 or 136 186.
- Alternately, the general public can report suspect chestnut blight on detections to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on **1800 084 881**.



# Our Response

- Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity officers surveyed chestnut trees in the Wandiligong and Eurobin areas in spring 2016 but did not find any further infections.
- Agriculture Victoria is committed to continue with the chestnut blight eradication campaign.
- A new response plan has been submitted to the National Committee for Emergency Plant Pests
- Agriculture Victoria is waiting for a decision to submit for funding approval
- **HOWEVER** we are proceeding with the response ahead of funding approval.
- New surveys in the Ovens Valley are due to start in early April

# Latest Surveillance effort

- Winter/ spring surveillance effort was completed on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- 87 properties were visited and 16,643 trees were inspected for disease symptoms.
- 3 samples were taken from Wandiligong but all were negative for Chestnut blight and were diagnosed as eucalyptus canker.
- Surveillance this winter/spring focussed on the following areas:

- 5 km radius around IP2 and 3 in Eurobin area. This was the initial area that blight was detected and the area of the most recent detection, hence the larger 5 km area.
- 1 km radius around IP6 in the smoko area.
- 1km radius around IP10,11 and 13 in the Wandiligong area.
- Property surveillance on IP4 and 9 in the Bright area.
- Autumn surveillance is planned for Autumn 2017 and covers all current and historic infected properties.
- Surveillance will continue in late winter spring 2017 as previous survey area.
- 2018 Autumn surveillance all IP's and on high risk areas.

# Changes in Restrictions

- The Restricted area remains the same as previously legislated
- All previous pest quarantine areas were rescinded after those area were free of blight for the requisite 2 years
- One new pest quarantine area was gazetted in November 2016 around the newly infected property

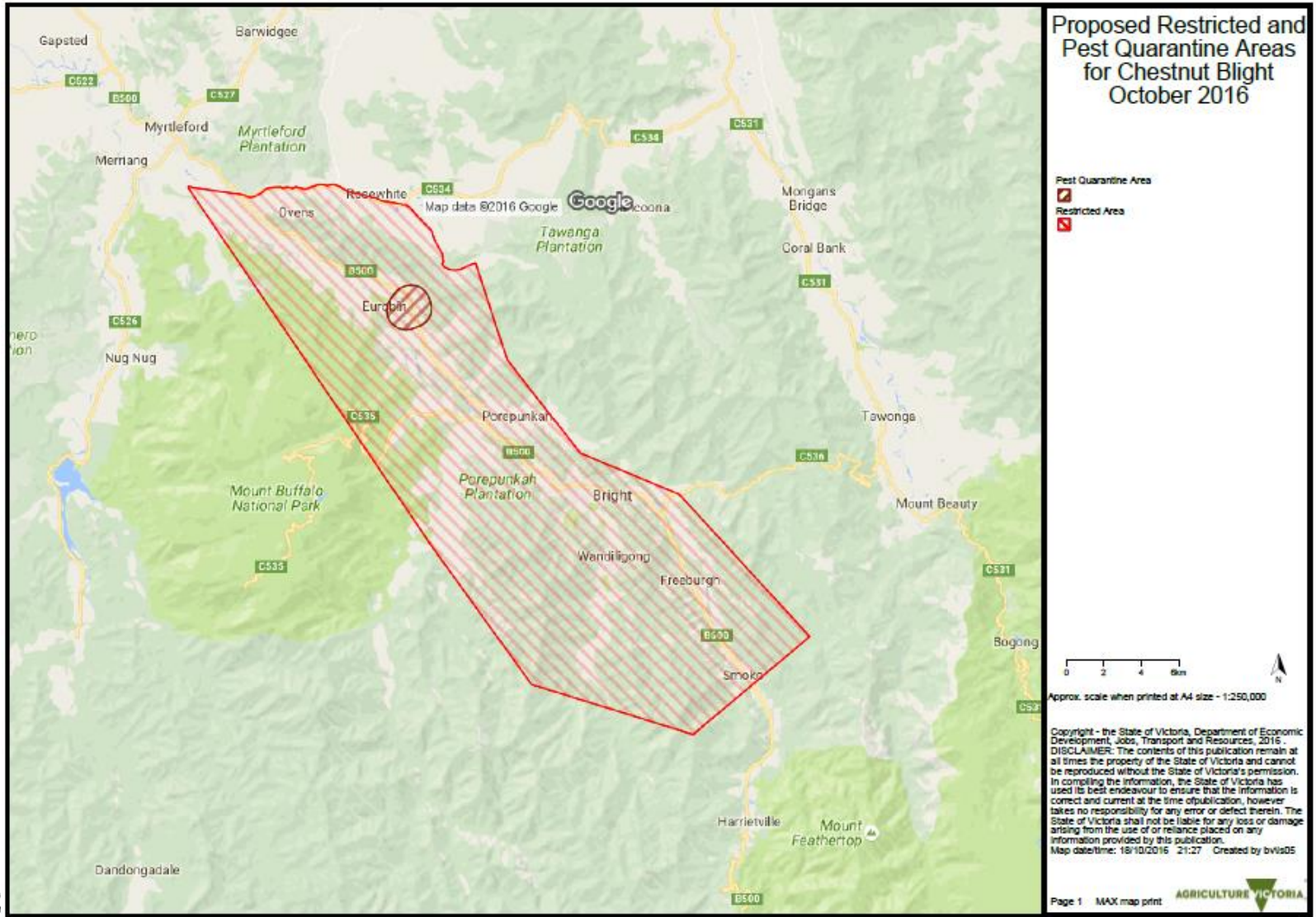
# Properties with Eurobin PQA

- No host plants or materials (including agricultural equipment) can be moved from properties **within the PQA** without a permit issued by Agriculture Victoria.  
***Important to Note:*** Owners of infected properties will not be permitted to move host plants.
- In addition to a permit, any movement of host plants or materials **out of the PQA** will require an inspection and a Plant Health Certificate (at no cost) issued by an Agriculture Victoria Inspector.

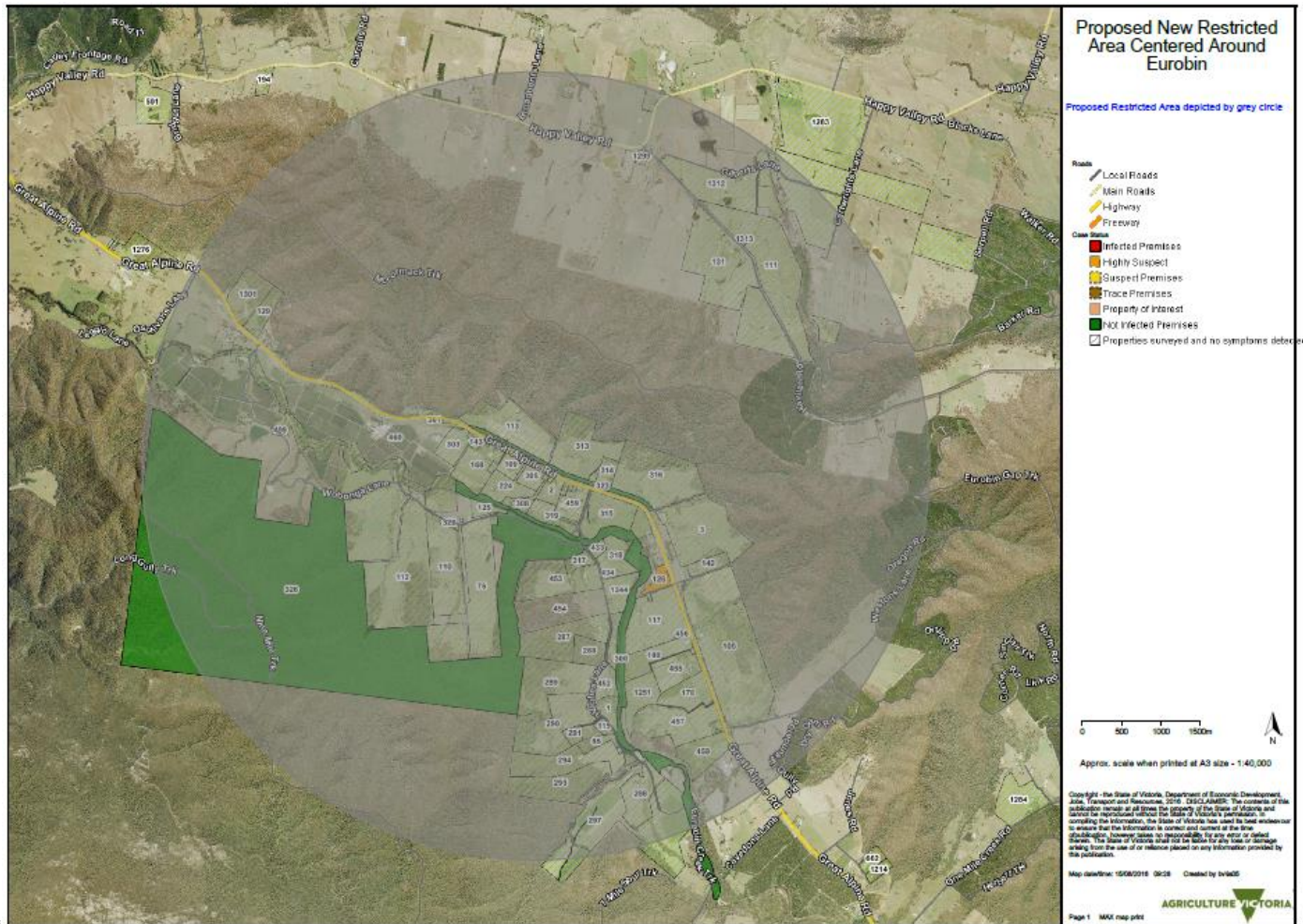
# Properties in RA.

- No chestnut blight host plants or plant products can be moved from the property without a permit.
- Unlike for PQAs, agricultural equipment and used packaging can move without restriction from the property. However good farm biosecurity and hygiene practices are strongly recommended for these movements.

# New Pest Quarantine area within the Restricted Area



# New Pest Quarantine Area





# Property Identification Codes (PICs)

- Property Identification codes are still an important part of any plant emergency response.
- The registration for PICs remains disappointing with only 69 chestnut properties registered.
- We need better information on locations of chestnut groves to be able to quickly respond to new outbreaks of ANY pest of chestnut trees.
- We urge unregistered growers to go to the Agriculture Victoria web site and register on line.
- Registering for PICs is free.
- If you have a PIC for your sheep or cattle, it is easy to just amend the registration to include chestnuts. You will still have the same PIC number.