

# Chestnut blight

## Questions and answers

### **Why is this program important and what can I do to help?**

This program is important to protect the chestnut industry from tree deaths and loss of produce. Should eradication efforts fail and the disease be declared endemic, Australian chestnut growers will be forced to compete with cheap chestnut imports from China and South Korea. You can help by inspecting your trees and reporting any suspect symptoms to the Customer Service Centre on 136 186. There are also restrictions in place in the Ovens Valley that ensure the eradication response is not compromised by unauthorised movements of high risk host material. This is important as the program is nearing its completion

### **What restrictions are in place?**

Information on chestnut blight restrictions is available at [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au) (search for 'chestnut blight'). Penalties apply for non-compliance – so make sure you understand what requirements apply to you. Regulated items include any chestnut or oak plant or plant product (except nuts), agricultural equipment/tools and used packages.

### **I thought the program had finished and there were no restrictions in place?**

No, the program has been actively operating since 2010. Restrictions have always been in place. Note that restrictions have recently changed and you will need to familiarise yourself with these new restrictions, which are available at [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au) and summarised in the Industry Notice accompanying this. The onus is on individual property owners and chestnut growers to comply with these restrictions.

### **Why were the restrictions changed?**

Previous declared areas were large and declared at a time when the disease was more wide-spread. The risk of natural disease spread from single trees is now lower, and the reduced size of the area will improve regulation of these restrictions and remove regulatory burden for those no longer affected.

### **Will I be charged any fees to meet requirements?**

No, fees and charges have not been used at any point in this program.

### **Why has it changed from destroying entire groves to a 10 m zone around an infected tree?**

Evidence from previous surveys shows the program is in the final stage, with only single infected trees being detected. The risk of natural disease spread from single trees is lower, especially if the lesions have only just developed. The move from a 100 m destruction zone to a 10 m destruction zone was considered and agreed to nationally. As a precaution, all host trees within 100 m of the site of the infected tree are being monitored every month from October to March to ensure there are no other infected trees present.

### **If I find suspicious chestnut blight symptoms, can I just remove my own tree?**

No, you are legally required to report chestnut blight symptoms to DEDJTR. Penalties apply for failure to report symptoms. You can report symptoms by phoning 136 186 or by emailing (including photographs) [plant.protection@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:plant.protection@ecodev.vic.gov.au). It is important the program is not compromised in the last six months.

### **What have been the links between Infected Properties?**

Infected properties have been found to be linked with grafting material and use of infected equipment between properties. Biosecurity hygiene is very important in preventing its spread. You can find information on recommended hygiene practices by searching 'chestnut blight' at [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au) and reading the accompanying Industry Notice.

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## How are Owner Reimbursement Costs (ORCs) worked out?

ORCs are calculated according to an agreed formula for nut producers, and can be found in the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed on the Plant Health Australia website. Growers must produce evidence of their cost of production and their income from chestnuts. The ORC evidence framework provides a guide to the independent assessor and the grower on the evidence required.

## Is there money for ORCs if more detections are made?

Some provision exists for further ORCs if further low level infected tree detections are identified before June 2016. If a highly infected grove is detected, then the national response plan 2014/16 will be reviewed for national consideration and evaluation.

## What is a Property Identification Code (PIC)?

A Property Identification Code (PIC) is the eight character alphanumeric code allocated by DEDJTR or the equivalent authority in other states and territories to a property used for agricultural purposes. Individuals who grow 20 or more chestnut trees must have a PIC.

## Why is having a PIC important?

PICs enable DEDJTR to quickly alert producers of a plant pest or disease outbreak that may impact their business. DEDJTR can also use PICs to rapidly contact growers of changes in trade restrictions, surveys in their area and other useful information which would help in containing or eradicating a pest or disease. The onus is on the individual property and chestnut grower to comply with PIC requirements.

## How do I apply for a PIC?

A PIC application form is included with this information package. Please complete and return using the details provided. Alternatively you can register online, via [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au).

## When is the program going to finish?

The program is likely to finish early July 2016. Surveillance will continue up until this time. Stakeholders will be notified when the program has finished.

## Who can I contact directly if I have any questions regarding this information package?

You can contact either Amy Moore (Chestnut Blight Priority Response Manager) on 0418 537 919 or Martin Mebalds (Senior Officer – Plant Surveillance Biosecurity) on 03 59242623.

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