CHESTNUT BLIGHT

AUGUST UPDATE

Call to Action

- Chestnuts Australia Inc and Agriculture Victoria are urging all chestnut growers in north east Victoria to examine their trees thoroughly and report any signs of chestnut blight.
- You can report the disease directly to Agriculture Victoria's Biosecurity Officer on (02) 6043 7900 or 136 186.
- Alternatively phone the national Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.This number can also be used across all states and territories to report suspect plant pest and disease symptoms.
- Information on Chestnut Blight including photos to help identify disease symptoms is available on the Agriculture Victoria website **agriculture.vic.gov.au**.
- It is important that this disease is found quickly to facilitate a successful eradication campaign.

New Confirmation Of The Disease

The Australian Chestnut Industry was looking to be able to report that Chestnut Blight had been eradicated but unfortunately a single tree has recently been identified as having Chestnut Blight.

Through the vigilance of a grower a tree showing unusual symptoms was reported to the Agriculture Victoria and on the results have come back confirming a new positive detection of ***Cryphonectria parasitica*** (chestnut blight).

The Australian Chief Plant Health Officer and the Chestnut Industry Development Officer/Emergency Plant Pest Deed party representative were informed of the detection on the 1st August 2016.

The new detection will require a re-evaluation of the current response plan by the CCEPP and that process commenced with a CCEPP teleconference today – 10th August 2016 at which the Chestnut Industry was represented by Dave McIntyre and Trevor Ranford.

Current Situation

- There has been a new detection of Chestnut blight on one property in the Ovens Valley in north eastern Victoria.

- In late July 2016, a vigilant grower contacted Agriculture Victoria about a suspicious disease on his chestnut tree.

- A small tree with a canker was sampled and found to be affected by chestnut blight by DNA sequencing. The entire affected section of the trunk was removed for sampling.

- This property was surveyed in May 2016 but symptoms were not evident at the time. It is believed the recent wet conditions have been responsible for the disease surfacing out from beneath the bark.

- Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity Officers have acted quickly to contain the disease, and will destroy all host trees within 10m of the infected tree. Nearby trees may have been infected from spores coming from the infected wood.

- To date there are no obvious traces to other infected properties other than a separation of 1.2 and 1.7km from the two closest infected properties.

- To further minimise the risk of spread, an infested lands notice is being issued to the grower which restricts the movement of planting material and machinery from the property.

- The current infected tree is the first case of the disease in two years.

- This disease may lie dormant, and wait for the right conditions before it emerges from the bark. With the current weather conditions being favourable, prompt detection and reporting of any suspect symptoms is critical.

- Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity officers will be surveying chestnut trees in the Wandiligong and Eurobin areas in the coming weeks to ensure that there are no more newly emerged chestnut blight infections.

Background

- The last infections were in the Ovens Valley when three infected trees were found in winter 2014. These trees were destroyed in line with the current Chestnut blight response plan.

- The eradication program has remained effective with 461 infected trees found in 2010, then only 7 during 2011 and 2012.

About Chestnut blight

- Chestnut blight is caused by the bark-inhabiting fungus (***Cryphonectria parasitica***), which mostly affects the trunk and branches. It is a declared exotic disease which can seriously harm the chestnut industry.

- Chestnut blight invades stems and branches of any size and causes cankers that can grow rapidly. These cankers in most cases continue to develop until the stem or branches are girdled and the tree is entirely colonised and eventually dies.

- Other symptoms of the pathogen include cracking bark, bark sloughing, necrosis and resin exudation.

- The disease can be spread by fungal spores or on budding material or any infected trees or cuttings. Agricultural equipment and used packaging are potential vectors and people can also carry the infection, particularly on boots and clothing.

- Chestnut blight occurs in Japan, China Korea, USA, Canada and throughout Europe.

The current wet conditions are similar to those in 2010 so the possibility of the disease expressing itself is highly probable. As a result it is an ideal time for growers to undertake their own surveillance and tree inspections.

If you find any unusual signs please report them.

Destruction of any infected trees now will assist in the long term desire to eradicate Chestnut Blight from Australia.

If you require any assistance of information please do not hesitate to contact Trevor Ranford, CAI Industry Development Officer on 0417 809 172.

Brian Casey
President
Chestnuts Australia Inc.