

Chestnut blight

Industry notice July 2014

New chestnut blight detections

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) has been conducting a chestnut blight surveillance program since the outbreak of the disease in 2010.

During the autumn 2014 phase of the surveillance program, more than 28,000 trees on 62 properties were examined for chestnut blight.

Two chestnut blight infections have been detected on separate properties in the Ovens Valley.

Both infections have been assessed as minor and are on single trees. Under the current management protocols, only a small number of trees will need to be removed.

DEPI will conduct repeat surveys on affected and linked properties.

Host material movement restrictions

Following any new detections, there are restrictions on the movement from infected and linked properties of chestnut blight host materials related to chestnut and oak trees i.e:

- equipment and machinery
- nursery stock
- pruning material and wood.

Treatment protocols will apply to the movement of nuts.

Growers on properties not linked to the infected properties will not be affected.

Residential householders with chestnut or oak trees on their properties will also not be affected by these detections.

For more information on movement restrictions, please contact Martin Mebalds on (03) 9210 9222.



Orange chestnut blight stroma on chestnut bark

Monitoring and hygiene

The new detections demonstrate the value of continued surveillance for chestnut blight and the ongoing need for growers to stay alert for symptoms of the disease and to employ sound farm hygiene practices.

Below are some actions which chestnut growers can take to minimise the risk of chestnut blight developing and spreading.

Chestnut blight can spread via:

- airborne spores
- rain splash
- transport of infected material
- farm operations e.g. pruning
- machinery and equipment.

The new detections show that chestnut blight symptoms may take over a year to develop so it is important to **keep monitoring trees for symptoms and report any suspected symptoms**.

The following measures should help to ensure that any undetected disease is not spread.

Protect healthy trees

Protect chestnut trees with regular applications of fungicides.

Fungicides will be most effective during spring and in warm, wet periods, which are ideal times for fungal spore germination and infection.

Destroy prunings by fire

Cut chestnut branches, stumps etc. should be burnt as soon as possible—infected branches can produce new fungal spores for at least a year.

Ensure prunings are not buried - chestnut blight fungus can survive for long periods on buried branches and could survive the heat from a fire on the surface above it.

Restrict on-farm movements

Use signage to direct farm visitors to park vehicles in a designated area and avoid the need for them to enter chestnut groves.

Ensure grazing animals are not moved onto your property from known infected areas.

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Ensure new propagating material is clean

Keep records of where you source your propagating material and ensure it comes from a property certified to have no visible signs of chestnut blight.

Ensure good hygiene when people or equipment move between properties

Make sure contractors have thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated their machinery and equipment before entering your property, especially if they have been on other chestnut properties.

Any equipment surface coming into contact with chestnut bark, wood or nuts should be cleaned and disinfected before it leaves or enters your property.

Anyone working with chestnut trees should change into clean clothing and shoes when moving between properties.

These between-property measures should be seen as the minimum required to maintain an acceptable level of hygiene.

Ensure good hygiene when working with trees

New infections have been noticed around pruning cuts and tree injection points. Protect cut or damaged branches with a pruning paint which contains a fungicide.

If practical, use handsaws and disinfect them regularly.

If using a chainsaw, remember that sawdust from chainsaws could spread chestnut blight and proper disinfection of the machine can be difficult and time-consuming.



Chain sawing can spread infected bark

Cleaning and disinfection

Wash-down of machinery

Thoroughly clean machinery with high pressure washing (hot water is best). After all soil and organic matter is removed, including underneath and in out-of-the-way places, rinse with a water/disinfectant mix.

Hard surfaces and tools

Thoroughly clean bins, pots, hand tools etc. by washing, before the use of a suitable water/disinfectant mix.

Choice of disinfectants

Some quaternary ammonia compounds (e.g. Phytoclean®) are effective for surface disinfection, low in toxicity and generally non-corrosive.

Chlorine bleach (hypochlorite) can be an effective disinfectant, but is corrosive to metals and cloth, is rapidly inactivated by organic matter such as soil and is potentially harmful to users at higher concentrations.

Methylated spirits at a suitable concentration (3 cups diluted with 1 cup of water) is an effective disinfectant for hand tools, but is highly flammable and volatile.

Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the use of any disinfectant product.

Reporting

Landholders must notify DEPI if they find suspected chestnut blight symptoms - phone **136 186** or email **plant.protection@depi.vic.gov.au**

Do not collect samples of suspected chestnut blight, as this could spread the disease.

Further information

More information about chestnut blight can be found on the DEPI website via **www.depi.vic.gov.au/psb**

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