

Media Release

Tuesday 19 January 2020 | Media contact: Sophie Patrick 0402 928 452

OLD CHESTNUT NEEDS NEW MANAGEMENT IN VICTORIA

Victorian chestnut growers will be supported with a range of new materials to manage chestnut blight on their trees.

Chestnut blight was first detected in north-east Victoria in 2010. Despite extensive efforts to eradicate the exotic plant disease, it remains present in Victoria and in 2019 was determined difficult to eradicate.

Victoria's Acting Chief Plant Health Officer Dr Stephen Dibley encouraged growers and other landowners with chestnut trees to use these resources to help look for and manage chestnut blight on their property.

The resources include a new [Managing chestnut blight free online course](#), a guide to managing chestnut blight, a chestnut blight surveillance form and posters for display in workplaces and packing sheds.

"Growers are our first line of defence against chestnut blight, to minimise it spreading. Please inspect your chestnut and oak trees every three months for chestnut blight symptoms," Dr Dibley said.

"Chestnut blight is a disease of chestnut and oak trees, caused by a fungus that grows underneath the bark and creates cankers, which slowly surround the infected trunk, stem or branch and eventually kill the tree.

"Early detection is key. Landholders should destroy infected trees within 14 days of detection – this is critical to minimising the spread of chestnut blight.

"All infected plant material must be burnt completely to ash as chestnut blight can survive on partially burnt material, dead and buried wood."

Dr Dibley said Agriculture Victoria was supporting industry to lead and deliver a strong, effective and sustainable long-term management program.

Brian Casey, Chair of Chestnuts Australia Inc Chestnut Blight Committee, said that during the first few years of the response many infected trees were removed including some whole orchards and since then there have been only a few infected trees detected. The new industry led management program will be built around self-inspection and recording in an agreed national platform.

"Chestnut blight has the potential to decimate the \$85 million farm gate investment by Australian Chestnut producers and the annual production of \$10 million," Mr Casey said.

"The newly appointed Chestnut Industry Biosecurity Officer will work with growers, other landowners and the community to build a strong and resilient program over the next five years".

Report suspected detections to the Industry Biosecurity Officer at ibo@chestnutsaustralia.com.au in Victoria. Interstate detections should be reported to the national Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

For more information and to access the resources, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au or www.chestnutsaustraliainc.com.au, or call the Agriculture Victoria Customer Contact Centre on 136 186.