

# Chestnut blight update

## Industry notice – August 2017

*The exotic disease **chestnut blight** has not been detected since July 2016. However, it is vital chestnut growers remain vigilant for signs of the disease during the final stages of the eradication program.*

### THE NEW CHESTNUT BLIGHT RESPONSE PLAN

The National Management Group (NMG) recently approved the new Chestnut Blight Response Plan, effectively permitting the extension of the eradication effort. The plan was updated to reflect changes required to the eradication program following the July 2016 chestnut blight detection in Eurobin.

The NMG is the national body that makes decisions on Australia's exotic pest eradication programs, which are delivered through the cost-sharing arrangements between the Commonwealth and state/territory governments. The NMG is comprised of representatives of all levels of Government responsible for agriculture/biosecurity and representatives from the chestnut industry.

### ERADICATION PROGRAM – IN THE HOME STRETCH

After the July 2016 detection, the chestnut blight eradication program was extended to August 2018 to ensure agreed time has passed to provide confidence the disease has been eradicated from Victoria. At this time, if no further detections are made, Victoria will apply for area freedom, which will lift the restrictions currently limiting movement of host material and equipment in the Ovens Valley Restricted Area (RA).

If however a new detection of the disease is made, an immediate review of the Chestnut Blight Response Plan will be triggered to determine if the disease is still considered eradicable.

### RESULTS FROM AUTUMN SURVEYS

Agriculture Victoria crews conducted autumn surveillance for chestnut blight during April and May this year. A total of 8,188 chestnut trees were inspected across ten properties in the RA.

Autumn surveys focused on currently infected and previously infected properties for the emergence of latent infections. No infected trees were found during the surveys.

### SURVEYS STARTING IN SEPTEMBER 2017

The next round of chestnut blight surveillance is scheduled to begin in early September 2017 and will continue through to mid-October. Agriculture Victoria crews are set to inspect approximately 16,026 chestnut trees in their efforts to find any remaining latent infections in the RA.

Chestnut tree surveys are being conducted in the same areas as last winter/spring surveys. These areas are the 1km zones around previous infected properties in Wandiligong, Smoko and Bright and a 5km zone around the current and previously infected properties in Eurobin.

### DON'T GAMBLE - IF IN DOUBT, SEEK US OUT

Do not wait for Agriculture Victoria surveillance crews to inspect your property later this year. If you suspect you have found chestnut blight, make a report to Agriculture Victoria immediately by calling 136 186.

It is vital for the future of the Australian chestnut industry we find all blight outbreaks and eradicate them. Remember, chestnut blight is a reportable exotic disease in Victoria and growers must notify Agriculture Victoria if they suspect they have found the disease.

## CHESTNUT BLIGHT IS HIGHLY VISIBLE ON RECENTLY CUT WOOD

Recently cut or damaged chestnut tree branches are more likely to show chestnut blight symptoms and consequently produce spores. The chestnut blight fungus has also been shown to survive on dead wood and can produce spores (the disease's means for spreading) for over a year.

This time of year (during and after pruning activity) provides chestnut growers with the perfect opportunity to inspect their trees and pruning piles for evidence of chestnut blight. If suspect prunings or symptoms on branch wounds are found, growers must take photos of the symptoms, must not make contact with suspect wood and must report the suspicious symptoms to Agriculture Victoria immediately.

Agriculture Victoria biosecurity staff will visit your property to take samples and ensure suspect trees are quarantined to reduce the spread whilst a diagnosis of the sample is made. If the sample is positive for chestnut blight, biosecurity staff will work with the property owner to determine eradication tactics.

As a precaution, growers should always pile and burn their tree prunings and must not bury them under any circumstance – as chestnut blight fungus can survive for long periods on buried branches.



Above: A branch showing sporulation occurring around a cracked canker

## MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS STILL IN PLACE

Although the chestnut blight surveillance and eradication program is in its final stages, the restrictions on the movement of chestnut blight host material (oak and chestnut trees and related material and equipment) are still in place.

The types of restrictions vary depending on whether the source property is located in the 1km Pest Quarantine Area (PQA) in Eurobin, or within the broader RA.

Further information on host materials, movement restrictions and the two restricted areas are available by searching for the words 'chestnut blight' on the Agriculture Victoria website: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au)

## SPOTLIGHT ON PICS AND MATERIAL MOVEMENT

Agriculture Victoria is planning a compliance program in 2017-18 to investigate whether growers are meeting their obligations in terms of chestnut blight movement restrictions.

Permit requirements have been in place since 2010 and Agriculture Victoria encourages all growers to ensure they have the appropriate permits in place, where required.

Restricting movement of materials and equipment from high-risk areas such as PQAs and the RA are key to the success of the chestnut blight eradication program. Significant investment has been made since 2010 by industry and government; therefore, growers have a responsibility to follow restrictions for the benefit of the entire chestnut industry.

Growers found moving host plant material or equipment in contradiction to the Chestnut Blight Order may be prosecuted under the *Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 (the Act)*.

## PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION CODES (PIC)

Property Identification Codes (PICs) are mandatory for all chestnut groves in Victoria with 20 trees or more. PIC compliance is underway and failure to register for a PIC may see growers subject to penalties under *the Act*.

PICs provide Agriculture Victoria with the ability to respond to outbreaks of exotic pests and diseases quickly and efficiently. This is crucial when chestnut blight is still under an eradication program. Victorian chestnut growers can register for a PIC free of charge by ringing the PIC helpline **1800 678 779** or via searching for 'PIC' on the Agriculture Victoria website at: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au)

## ACCESSIBILITY

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