

PLANT HEALTH NEWSLETTER

NO. 17 (November 2004)



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1. Trade notification: From 1 December 2004 the Forestry Commission will **physically inspect** all imports of oak and other susceptible wood originating in the USA.

Background

Following the first detection of *Phytophthora ramorum* (the cause of a disease known as Sudden Oak Death) in the UK in April 2002, emergency legislation was put in place to prevent accidental importation in susceptible trees, plants and wood originating in the USA. The presence of the disease was later confirmed in an oak tree in England in October 2003, with further infected trees confirmed at further sites the following month. The UK emergency measures were replaced by EU legislation in November 2002 and this is being reviewed annually.

The regulations controlling imports of wood and wood products are set out in the Plant Health (Forestry) (Great Britain) Order 1993 (SI 1993/1283, as amended) and these prescribe landing requirements for wood of oak. These require that imports of wood of oak from the USA are treated to protect against, in particular, another fungal organism *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, the cause of Oak wilt disease. The Plant Health (*Phytophthora ramorum*) (Great Britain) (No. 2) Order 2002 (SI 2002 No. 2589) extends the scope of these controls to include wood of other known hosts. This Order will shortly be revoked and superseded by another Order, which will maintain the existing requirements but strengthen the provisions to allow us to eradicate or contain the disease wherever it is found on trees.

Implementation

The Forestry Commission enforces the controls on wood and wood products through its system of import inspections carried out at ports of entry.

From 1st December 2004 the Forestry Commission will physically inspect all imports of Oak (*Quercus* spp), Oregon Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Tanbark Oak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*) originating in the USA. Landing of isolated bark derived from these trees is prohibited.

Guidance

- 1) Importers must provide three working days notice of landing. (article 19A SI 1993/1283 as amended)
- 2) The inspection will take place at the point of entry.
- 3) It is the responsibility of the importer to ensure that the inspector is able to perform his duties safely. If an inspector cannot gain safe access to the material it will not be inspected and the importer will be charged for an aborted visit.
- 4) Phytosanitary certificates must include an additional declaration stating that "the wood originates in areas in which non-European isolates of the harmful organism is known not to occur". The area from where the material originates shall be specified under 'place of origin' (article 4, SI 2002/2589). If this information is omitted the material will be held until a satisfactory certificate is received from the relevant Plant Protection Organisation.
- 5) If timber is found to be in breach of regulations we may order that it be fumigated or destroyed, or refused permission to land.

Charges

Each container inspection will be charged @ £11.50

If remedial action is required the additional charge will be £27 for the first hour and £10 for each 30 minutes or part thereof thereafter.

Enquiries

All enquiries relating to this notice should be directed to the relevant plant health regional manager –

Steve Mears, Regional Manager (South) – Tel: 01507 328275
Mobile 07831 204324 regarding oak imports to Felixstowe, Thamesport, Tilbury and Southampton

Stewart Snape, Regional Manager (North) Tel 0131-314-6103
Mobile 07810 690670 regarding oak imports to Liverpool, Coatbridge and Grangemouth

Or

Ian Brownlee, Operations Manager Tel 0131-314-6480

2. *Phytophthora kernovii* – Native Oaks Susceptible to New Tree Disease

Two cases of a new pathogen that could seriously affect trees have been found in native English Oak (*Quercus robur*) trees in a wood near Redruth in Cornwall. This is the first discovery of fungal disease caused by this *Phytophthora* species, in native oak trees in Britain.

The new pathogen was first discovered in the wood in Cornwall earlier this year when it was found on rhododendron plants and a beech tree. The phytophthora, known informally as *Phytophthora taxon C*, is so new it does not yet have a formal scientific name but the tree pathologist who first discovered it, Clive Brasier, Professor Emeritus at the Forestry Commission's Forest Research Agency, has dubbed it *Phytophthora kernovii* – the ancient name for Cornwall. Professor Brasier and colleagues at the Commission's Surrey-based research centre, are monitoring two more oak trees in the area which they suspect may also be infected.

The pathogen, is related to *Phytophthora ramorum*, known in the USA as Sudden Oak Death because of the widespread blight it has caused on American oak species. However, until now, native British oaks have proved to be resistant to both pathogens. Since the first discovery of *P ramorum* in Britain early in 2002, neither laboratory tests nor painstaking surveys of over fifteen hundred woodland and forest sites across Britain have established any susceptibility of native oak trees to the deadly fungus.

Although *P ramorum* is known to exist in over a dozen countries throughout Europe, the new *Phytophthora* is so far thought to be specific to Britain. A major concern is that laboratory tests and observations in the wild indicate that it is more aggressive, and much faster spreading, than *P ramorum*. Rhododendron, the main host and source of infection succumbs in just a few weeks rather than months.

This latest discovery raises fears over the pathogen's potential impact on Britain's 200 million oak trees, as well as other native tree species that may now prove to be susceptible.

Our hope was that *P ramorum*, and this more virulent pathogen, would not spread to native species. This new evidence indicates that this is not the case. We need to ensure that the precautions we take to identify and control the spread of this disease are commensurate with this significantly more serious threat.

The infected trees are already within an area quarantined because of the presence of *P ramorum*. Any infected plants are being destroyed, as are any potential hosts in the immediate area."

In the biggest exercise of its type ever undertaken in Britain, Defra and other Government plant health inspectors have more than doubled their visits to nurseries and garden centres and inspected over a thousand lorries carrying imported plants from the continent. The Forestry Commission has surveyed almost 1,500 woodland sites. *P ramorum* has been found at over 370 sites in England and Wales, mostly on shrubs at nurseries and garden centres. At most of these sites the disease appears to have been successfully eradicated. There have been few finds on trees, largely restricted to large gardens in the south of England.

If anyone suspects the presence of the disease on plants they should contact their local Defra or SEERAD office. If the disease is suspected on trees the contact should be the Forestry Commission. Further information on the two phytophthora is available on the Forestry Commission and Defra websites – www.forestry.gov.uk and www.defra.gov.uk.

3. New EU Import Regulations published

The so-called 'wood package' of amendments to the EU Plant Health Directive has been published in the Official Journal of the European Union (Commission Directive 2004/102/EC, L. 309, 06.10.04, p9.) One of the main changes will be a requirement that all wood packaging material entering the Community from 1 March 2005 will need to be ISPM 15 compliant and marked. *More details are on our website*

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