

PHYTOPHTHORA RAMORUM ON JAPANESE LARCH IN SOUTH WALES

1. This note is a summary of recent information about the developing situation regarding an outbreak of *Phytophthora ramorum* in South Wales. Currently the outbreak has only been found in Welsh Assembly Government woodlands managed by Forestry Commission Wales (FCW).

Background

2. The quarantine disease *Phytophthora ramorum* was first found in the UK in 2002. In the wider environment it has largely been associated with *Rhododendron* species that act as a host from which spores are produced. When produced in sufficient quantity these can infect trees and other plants generally in the immediate vicinity. Control efforts in woodlands had focused primarily on removing *Rhododendron*. The Forestry Commission, Forest Research and the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) have been working together to survey, study and control the disease.
3. In August 2009 *Phytophthora ramorum* was confirmed on *Rhododendron ponticum* in the understorey of mature Japanese larch, and also on the foliage of thicket stage Japanese larch in Cornwall. Subsequent inspection and testing at further sites in north and west Devon and west Somerset has confirmed the presence of *Phytophthora ramorum* in all ages of Japanese larch, as well as species in its understorey. It has also been confirmed that the foliage of infected Japanese larch produces spores at about five times the level of *Rhododendron* and that these can be dispersed considerable distances, probably some tens of kilometres. These findings highlight a significant change in the dynamics of the disease experienced to date. Previously tree infection has only taken place in the proximity of infected *Rhododendron*.
4. Aerial surveys of woodland in South Wales in May 2010 identified symptoms that indicated that *Phytophthora ramorum* might be present. Subsequent inspections and testing have confirmed that there is widespread infection in the lower Afan Valley, Garw Valley and Vale of Glamorgan, in south Wales, in all ages of larch. The situation is changing rapidly as we undertake more surveys and it is likely that the infection has spread more widely.

What we are doing

5. We have implemented biosecurity measures on all infected sites. Please see the biosecurity measure on the FC Plant Health website at [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/phytophthoraprotocol30apr2010.pdf/\\$FILE/phytophtoraprotocol30apr2010.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/phytophthoraprotocol30apr2010.pdf/$FILE/phytophtoraprotocol30apr2010.pdf).
6. Signage will be erected at all entry points to infected woodlands informing the public of the infection and asking for their help in controlling the spread of infection.

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7. FCW will be entering into discussion with processors on the licencing of their premises to take infected larch.
 8. Felling of infected materials will be commencing shortly.
 9. We are continuing the survey of Japanese larch stands in South Wales.
 10. We have completed training of FCW staff on *Phytophthora ramorum* and biosecurity and will be rolling this out to all woodland owners and managers shortly.
 11. Grants & Regulations staff are following biosecurity measures for all site visits.
 12. Further updates will be issued periodically. A meeting to brief private sector owners and managers will be arranged shortly.

Symptoms

13. Information on *Phytophthora ramorum* symptoms experienced to date is widely available on the Forestry Commission's website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/WCAS-4Z5JLL>. On Japanese larch, shoots and foliage can be affected and are visible as wilted, withered shoot tips with blackened needles. The infected shoots shed their needles prematurely. Trees with branch dieback may have numerous cankers on their branches and upper trunk that can bleed resin. Please see symptoms handout.

What should woodland owners and managers do?

14. Look on the Forestry Commission website www.forestry.gov.uk/pramorur for more information and familiarise yourself with the symptoms and other details.
15. Maintain vigilance and regularly inspect your woods particularly where larch and/or Rhododendron are present. Please note that we are primarily concerned with larch in forests and woodland in relation to this change in the disease dynamics.
16. If you suspect your woodland may be infected or suspicious symptoms are present, you should report it to Forestry Commission Wales Grants & Regulations Office at Clawdd Newydd, Ruthin, Denbighshire, LL15 2NL Tel: 0300 068 0300, e-mail: con.nw@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.
17. The details you will be asked for will include:
 - Name and address;
 - Contact telephone and email;
 - Location of the woodland concerned (Grid reference or postcode or nearest town);

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- Approximate area and age of the Japanese larch;
 - Approximate area of Rhododendron (if present);
 - Is the Rhododendron (if present) showing symptoms;
 - Approximate date when symptoms were first noticed.

18. If you are concerned about an individual garden, parkland or amenity tree then you should contact the Forest Research Tree Health Diagnostic Advisory Service on 01420 23000 or visit www.forestresearch.gov.uk/ddas.

19. We strongly recommend you implement basic biosecurity measures, especially if you are concerned about infection of your woodlands <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/phytophthoraprotocol30apr2010.pdf/> .

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