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PHC Bulletin Newsletter



Updating you on recent activities of the Plant Health Centre

Issue 8, March 2022

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Welcome to Issue 8

Welcome to the March edition of our news bulletin. It has been a few months now since the shortest day, and the slow return of daylight in the morning and evenings is certainly welcome. We hope that you have all been weathering the various storms without too much disruption to your lives.

In this issue, in addition to recent developments on plant health relevant to Scotland, we have an upcoming event to announce, a recently published report to bring to your attention plus a current funding call, a blog penned by Prof. Adam Kleczkowski, a member of our Science Advisory Response Team, and finally a survey request for anyone with good examples of biosecurity deployed effectively (not just for plant health), also in the Blog section.

Scotland's Plant Health Conference 2022

We would like to invite you to register for **Scotland's Plant Health Conference 2022**, which will be held at the Apex City Quay hotel, Dundee on Wednesday the 1st of June. More on this in the Events section of this bulletin.

PHC project funding call

We have a new project call that has just gone live for applications, with a deadline of 12pm on Friday 8th April 2022:

A targeted analysis of the impact of insecticide withdrawals in Scotland, in the context of alternative control options (PHC2021/06).

Quick overview: Insecticides are commonly used in Scottish agricultural, horticultural and forestry production plus for amenity and natural environment management purposes. Over the last 10 years approximately 50% of UK insecticide active substances have been withdrawn due to increasing concern over human health and environmental impacts. Some of these losses will be mitigated through the use of alternatives but their practicality and cost under Scottish conditions is unknown. Given the likelihood that regulatory

restrictions on pesticide usage will not be reduced, widespread adoption of IPM might offer a way to reduce reliance upon 'at risk' pesticides.

This project call is requesting expert review of available literature to identify the insecticides of concern to Scotland and their association with current practices. This targeted review will ascertain which alternatives are available and their efficacy, and any interdependencies and evidence gaps will be identified. A key outcome of this call will be case studies of the alternative methods adopted by stakeholders to mitigate the impact of insecticide withdrawal, combined with desk-based and expert opinion analysis on their efficacy, practicality, and cost.

For the full call details, please go to [our website](#), and if you know of anyone with the enthusiasm to tackle this important work, then please pass the details on to them.

*Second finding of *Phytophthora pluvialis* in Scotland*

In the last edition of this bulletin we brought to your attention the surprise arrival of the tree pathogen *Phytophthora pluvialis* in the UK, including at a location near Loch Carron in the North West of Scotland.

Scottish Forestry have confirmed a second finding of this disease that is capable of affecting western hemlock, Douglas fir, tanoak and several pine species (particularly radiata pine), at a woodland site near to Loch Awe in Argyll (picked up by ongoing surveillance).

The *P. pluvialis* webpage has also been updated, and is the central point for information on *P. pluvialis* in Scotland as the situation develops.

*Potato spindle tuber viroid detected in *Solanum sisymbriifolium* seed*

Sticky nightshade (*Solanum sisymbriifolium*) was introduced to Europe from South America as an ornamental plant, and while it is considered a noxious weed in the Mediterranean region there has been recent interest in developing it as a 'trap crop' for potato cyst nematode. However, Fera have reported that testing of *S. sisymbriifolium* seed found Potato spindle tuber viroid (PSTVd) in several samples, which indicates that sticky nightshade is a natural host of PSTVd. They conclude that "Given the increased interest in the use of *S. sisymbriifolium* as a trap crop for PCN management in potato rotations, the role of this crop as a host of PSTVd and the risk of seed transmission and transmission via roots should be further investigated".

EPPO Reporting Service

There is now a monthly newsletter from EPPO which summarizes new data on quarantine and emerging pests, diseases and invasive plants.

New potential EU quarantine pests

EFSA recently published pest categorizations for pests on the EPPO Alert list: *Arboridia kakogawana* (Japanese grape leafhopper), *Crisicoccus pini* (Kuwana pine mealybug), *Phlyctinus callosus* (Banded fruit weevil) and *Xylotrechus chinensis* (Tiger longicorn beetle) as they satisfy the criteria to be regarded as potential EU quarantine pests.

I hope that you enjoy reading the rest of our bulletin and, as always, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us (details at the end of this email) if you have any issues for plant health in Scotland that you would like to highlight or questions that you have about our work.

-Sonia Humphris, Plant Health Centre Manager

Events



We would like to [invite you to register](#) for **Scotland's Plant Health Conference 2022**, which will take place in-person at Apex City Quay hotel, Dundee on Wednesday the 1st June 2022.

This one-day conference will again be a joint event bringing together the Plant Health Forum and the Plant Health Centre annual event. The event is targeted at stakeholders from, and involved in, the horticulture, landscaping, forestry, and agriculture sectors and aims to increase stakeholder awareness of plant biosecurity and current plant/tree health issues.

We are pleased to announce that Ms Slater, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity has kindly agreed to open the event and give a welcome address.

Please forward this information to any colleagues and associates that you think might be interested in attending.

Other events

Other events that the PHC will be represented at later this year include [Arable Scotland](#), on Tuesday the 5th of July 2022 at Balruddery Farm, Fowlis; and [Potatoes in Practice](#) - at the same location but on Thursday the 11th of August 2022. If you are involved in the arable or potato cultivation in Scotland then you will already know about these events, and we hope to see you there!

Publications



Since the last edition of this newsletter bulletin we have published one further report on our website: **A review of Gene Editing for the benefit of plant health.**

The Plant Health Centre was commissioned by the Scottish Government to review evidence relating to the potential of new gene editing technologies to address plant health issues in Scotland, with potential benefits, barriers to deployment and dis-benefits noted. This report forms part of the range of evidence on Novel Genomic Techniques.

Please find the full report [here, on our website.](#)

All of the PHC's published Project and Policy Reports plus other publications are available [here, on our website.](#)

Blog Spot - One Blog and One Questionnaire



Forests, climate, insects and people; A story of spruce forests in Central Europe and a lesson for Scotland - Blog by Prof. Adam Kleczkowski, Dept. of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Strathclyde.

Adam is a member of the PHCs Science, Advisory and Response Team and has kindly produced a blog for this bulletin in which he writes about the history of Spruce forests in Europe, and the lessons that need to be learned and incorporated into decision making for Scotland's forests moving forward; i.e. the plant health and climate change issues that they may face over the coming years.

Adam's blog can be found on his own blog site, [Statistically \(in\)significant](#). We thank Adam for taking the time to 'put pen to paper' and encourage you to read his article.

The quest for advances in biosecurity: people, tools, equipment and machinery - survey request from Dr Matt Elliot, Plant Health and Biosecurity Scientist, RBGE

Awareness of the risks posed by plant pests and diseases has increased significantly in recent years, as have some aspects of biosecurity. However, many gaps remain in our knowledge as we try to protect the environment and businesses from the impact of plant pests and diseases.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh are leading a project, funded by the PHC, to understand two aspects of biosecurity where evidence is lacking:

- How do we manage the biosecurity risk posed by people (visitors, volunteers, contractors and staff) entering and working in parks, gardens, forests, farms and the natural environment?
- How do we manage the biosecurity risk posed by the use and movement of tools, equipment and machinery which may be shared between sites?

To answer these questions, the project team are looking for examples of where biosecurity has been deployed to address these risks, both in Scotland and internationally, to see what lessons can be learned. In addition, they will look to other sectors, e.g., animal health,

invasive species management, etc. to if insights can be gained and applied to plant health.

You can help in this endeavour! The team have created an online questionnaire to gather evidence on how land managers manage the risks outlined above. They would be very grateful if you could spare 15 minutes to provide your biosecurity experiences. The questionnaire can be found at the link below and closes on the 31st March. Many thanks in advance for your time.

[Plant biosecurity, people, tools and machinery - survey](#)

Image credit: Hasselblad L1d-20c, PixaBay



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The Plant Health Centre is a virtual centre of expertise funded by Scottish Government through RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division) to help tackle plant health challenges for Scotland



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