



DAFF10

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## Update on Response to Myrtle Rust

The Myrtle rust National Management Group (NMG) met on 22 December 2010 to consider actions in response to the outbreak of Myrtle rust (*Uredo rangelii*) in New South Wales.

Myrtle rust is a disease that affects the Myrtaceae family of plants, which includes many Australian native species including Eucalyptus. Myrtle rust was first detected in Australia on the Central Coast of New South Wales in April 2010. Observations on the detections in state forests and nature reserves indicate that the disease may have been present in Australia for at least two years.

The fungus that causes Myrtle rust has not been found before in Australia. It belongs to a group of fungi known as the 'guava rust complex'. This complex of diseases is native to South America and is also present in the United States of America (Florida and Hawaii) and Mexico. It is not known how Myrtle rust entered Australia. Rust fungi produce microscopic spores which are carried by wind, people's clothing, plants or goods that are shipped around the world.

Based on advice from the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests and following the completion of actions undertaken under an interim response plan, the Myrtle rust NMG has agreed that it is not technically feasible to eradicate the rust.

The decision of the NMG reflects the impossibility of eradicating and slowing the spread of this disease. This is based on understanding the behavior of the disease, its increasing host range and its spread beyond the New South Wales Central Coast to a large number of domestic, commercial, public and recreational sites.

However, recognising the importance of ongoing chemical control, the Myrtle rust NMG has agreed that securing product registration for chemical use for all jurisdictions beyond the emergency response is an immediate priority.

Due to the potential for Myrtle rust to have an ongoing impact on the natural environment, the community and potentially affected industries, ongoing arrangements to nationally coordinate projects or direct actions to manage the disease are being finalised. A Myrtle rust Coordination Group, chaired by the Commonwealth, with technical and policy input to be provided by primary industries and environmental agencies within each jurisdiction, relevant non-government organisations and affected industries will be established.

The Myrtle rust Coordination Group will consider and coordinate ongoing actions to respond to Myrtle rust focusing on mitigating its impact on the natural environment, including threatened and endangered species and industries that rely on Myrtaceae. These actions will include education and awareness, strategies for industries and government to mitigate the impact of the disease in anticipation of further spread, collation and analysis of information about the behaviour of the disease and its impacts on natural ecosystems.

New South Wales had been implementing a nationally agreed interim response plan to respond to Myrtle rust since July 2010 under the provisions of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed - a legally binding agreement between the Australian Government, all state and territory governments, national plant industry body signatories and Plant Health Australia.



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# COMMUNIQUE

The interim response plan contained actions to suppress the spread of the disease with a view to its potential eradication while gaining additional knowledge of its host range and potential impact, required movement controls, host testing under controlled circumstances, DNA testing, surveillance of known infected properties and the natural environment, destruction of host material and ongoing suppression activities at known infected properties.

Through the implementation of actions within the interim response plan, the Myrtle rust NMG recognised that eradication of the disease was difficult to achieve, as historically, control of diseases spread by air-borne spores has had a very low chance of success.

The Myrtle rust NMG is comprised of the chief executive officers of the national and state/territory departments of agriculture and primary industries across Australia, representatives of peak industry bodies and Plant Health Australia. The group is chaired by the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Conall O'Connell.

Further information on Myrtle rust and actions undertaken under the Interim Response Plan can be found at: <http://www.daff.gov.au/aqis/quarantine/pests-diseases/myrtle-rust/myrtle-rust-qa>