



## Questions and Answers

### Little Cherry Virus 2

#### **What is Little Cherry Virus 2 (LChV-2)?**

Little Cherry Virus 2 (LChV-2) is a disease of cherry trees which has not previously been detected in Australia. LChV-2 exists in the roots, woody parts, leaves, twigs and stems of infected cherry trees. The virus is **not** spread by moving fruit.

Symptoms of LChV-2 on a cherry tree include a tendency for the fruit of the tree to be small, not fully ripened, poorly coloured, pointed and have reduced flavour. It is regarded as a high priority plant pest.

#### **Has it now been detected here?**

At this stage, LChV-2 is suspected to be here. Leaf samples from a cherry tree from an orchard in southern Tasmania were sent to DPIPWE plant pathology laboratories and have tested positive for LChV-2. A second test is being conducted by another laboratory to confirm the diagnosis, as is usual protocol.

#### **How long has LChV-2 been here?**

Typically, the disease is not noticed until the trees fruit at 5-6 years of age. The suspected infected trees at the orchard fit this age profile.

#### **How is LChV-2 spread?**

The insects which can spread the disease in other countries (such as the apple mealybug) are not known to be present in Australia. In the absence of insect vectors, LChV-2 can be spread by tree-to-tree root contact, the planting of infected rootstock and by grafting.

#### **How did the disease get onto the property?**

At this stage we are not sure how LChV-2 got on to the property. Tracing back to the source of the material is an important part of the response now underway.

#### **What is the plan to deal with LChV-2?**

As LChV-2 has not been detected in Australia before, the response to this detection is a national one that is led by the Tasmanian Government. At this point in time the plan is to determine if any other plants are infected and destroy those plants. Investigations will also try to determine where the virus originated.

**Can it be eradicated?**

Eradicating LChV-2 is Tasmania's objective.

**Could LChV-2 be in trees in other cherry orchards in Tasmania?**

This cannot be ruled out at this stage. A surveillance program will be part of the response program.

**What is being done about it?**

DPIPWE has established a response program. Major elements of the response are a surveillance, tracing and detection program, restrictions on movement of suspect tree material and eradication of any trees found to be infected with LChV-2. Restrictions on the movement of propagation material (rootstock, grafting material etc) from the property in question are in place.

**How long will this take?**

Given that trees typically do not exhibit obvious symptoms until 4 – 6 years of age, some elements of the response program are likely to be needed for a few years.

**What are the likely impacts on a property found to have some infected trees?**

Minimal, given the nature of the disease.

**Are there human health implications?**

The virus does not affect human health.

**Have national/international partners been informed?**

The Australian Government's Department of Agriculture is obliged to report exotic plant pest incursions under the International Plant Protection Convention.

**Will it affect export of Tasmanian cherries?**

The disease is not spread by cherries. The Commonwealth and Tasmanian authorities will work with overseas trading partners in the event that any market access issues arise.

**What should commercial cherry growers do?**

The industry organisation Fruit Growers Tasmania is working with their members to create a high degree of awareness about what to look out for on their own properties and to cooperate with the LChV-2 response program.

At this stage, commercial cherry growers need to be aware of the suspected presence of LChV-2 in one Tasmanian orchard and be alert to signs of it on their own properties.

A Little Cherry Virus 2 information line is available if growers have noticed symptoms of LChV-2 in their orchard (see fact sheet for symptoms). The information line is 0417 884 460. It will operate during business hours Monday-to-Friday.

**Will I be compensated if the virus is in my orchard?**

National arrangements provide for reimbursement in some instances, subject to Commonwealth, State, territory and industry considerations. This response program is a candidate for such arrangements.