



SWEET CHESTNUT BLIGHT UNCENSORED

Most people are now aware of the story so far surrounding the first UK finding of *Cryphonectria parasitica* (blight) in November 2011 at a farm in Warwickshire on sweet chestnut trees (*Castanea sativa*) planted in 2007 and sourced from a nursery in France.

However, tucked away in one of the mammoth reports regularly produced by the UK plant health authorities (this one by Food and Environment Research Agency [FERA]*) is an account which reveals a considerably more complex and higher risk situation.

First infected trees in the UK were indeed found in November 2011 at the unnamed Warwickshire farm, but on trees planted in different time frames and on different sites, having arrived at the farm along different distribution chains.

Eighty of the infected trees were planted in 2007, having been sourced from the French nursery, but an additional ten infected trees on a different site were planted later. These were purchased from a nursery in Devon which had sourced its stock from the same French nursery.

By the time the UK plant health authorities started to investigate, the nursery in Devon had sold all of its sweet chestnut stock. A Forestry Commission (FC) map reproduced in the FERA report shows how some 90 consignments of potentially infected trees were dispatched to sites across the UK.

The report says subsequent trace back through the records of both the French nursery and the UK supplier, by the Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate (PHSI) and the FC, led to the identification (as of April 2013) of nine further UK sites with infected trees.

FC focused on distribution of consignments of more than 10 trees leading to 30+ infected trees being found on an East Sussex farm and two infected trees at a private residence in Herefordshire. By May 2013 PHSI had additionally traced infected trees to seven private residences and one additional nursery mostly in southwest England.

The risk of sweet chestnut blight establishing in the UK does not end there. FERA says the vast majority of trees supplied by the French nursery into the UK were sold mail order by several different distributors, and that customer lists for deliveries made prior to 2011 are difficult to obtain.

No wonder the government has rushed to ban imports of sweet chestnut from known blight infected areas in Europe. If it all goes pear shaped then the government will no doubt claim it took appropriate and timely action. However, with potentially infected trees at apparently still unknown locations in the UK it could already be too late.

*FERA (2013) Rapid pest risk analysis for *Cryphonectria parasitica*. 23 pages. 20 May 2013.

Dr Terry Mabbett



BIGGA SEMINARS A HIT AT SUNNY SALTEX

It was standing room only during our education programme at this year's SALTEX.

We ran a whole day of free education presentations during the Wednesday of the show at a sweltering Windsor Racecourse – with CPD credits available for those attending.

Again we attracted experts from across the industry. Andy Wood, Course Manager at Robin Hood Golf Club, presented on greens drainage and was followed by Stuart Yarwood's seminar on managing and constructing bunkers on limited budgets. Stuart is Course Manager at Lymm Golf Club.

The day's final seminar was from Dr Simon Watson – Syngenta Turf and Landscape Technical Manager – on winter disease on golf greens. Dr Watson is pictured above.



GREAT AYTON WINS MCMILLAN TROPHY

Congratulations to Craig Ayton, greenkeeper at Foxhills Club & Resort, who won the Surrey Section McMillan Trophy held at Sunningdale.

Craig scored 40 points to win the competition, which was held on the New Course. Here he is being presented with the Trophy by Jack and Rita McMillan.