

Mr Martin Ward
Room 10GA07,
Sand Hutton,
York, Y41 1LZ
e-mail: martin.ward@fera.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone: +44 (0)1904 465634
Website: www.fera.defra.gov.uk/



31 October 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

CHALARA FRAXINEA

This letter provides information about the current situation regarding *Chalara fraxinea*, a harmful organism of ash trees.

A consultation on a Pest Risk Analysis prepared by the Forest Research Agency concluded on 26 October. Fera will be publishing details of the consultation outcome shortly, but there was overall support for protective measures against *Chalara fraxinea*. The results of surveillance to date have confirmed the presence of *Chalara fraxinea* in some areas in the East of England, but there is no evidence of widespread distribution across the UK. Taking into account the results of consultation and the current position on distribution, Defra's Secretary of State approved the introduction of legal restrictions on the import and movement of ash planting material, which took effect on 29 October. The Forestry Commission legislation giving effect to the new requirements is available at

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2707/contents/made>

The legislation:

- Prohibits all imports of ash plants, trees and seeds into Great Britain until further notice (as no pest free areas are established);
- Prohibits all movements of ash plants, trees and seeds within Great Britain until further notice (as no pest free areas are in place);
- Continues to permit logs, woodchips and firewood, which pose a very low risk of disease transmission especially when they are kiln dried, to be imported from EU countries. In the unlikely event that this material is found to contain infection, action such as destruction will be ordered;
- Continues to permit movements within Great Britain of all ash timber, which poses a very low risk of disease transmission.
- Continues to permit imports of sawn ash timber from certain countries abroad under existing regulations against the forestry pest Emerald Ash Borer. These require the material to be accompanied by official phytosanitary (plant health) certificates declaring that the material either originated in areas known to be free of EAB or that the wood is bark-free (which addresses the Chalara risk as well) before entering GB. Imported woodchips and bark of ash material have the same certification requirements as for wood, but the alternative to originating in an area of pest freedom is that the material has been processed into pieces of not more than 2.5cm thickness and width.

Although there are no specific measures on logs and firewood in the legislation, the general prohibition on spreading *Chalara fraxinea* will mean that movement is

prohibited within Great Britain of logs and firewood from sites with confirmed *Chalara fraxinea* infection which have been served with a Statutory Plant Health Notice.

All EU Member States and third countries have been informed of the new requirements. We have also notified the European Commission, who will consider whether requirements on *Chalara fraxinea* should be incorporated into EU plant health legislation. At the current time, no pest free areas for *Chalara fraxinea* have been established anywhere in the world, but this is possible for those countries/areas which remain free of the organism.

The Plant Health Authorities (Forestry Commission, Fera and Scottish Government) are contacting businesses involved in the growing and trading of ash to inform them of the new requirements. The establishment of pest free areas will be based on surveillance and other activities undertaken by the Plant Health Authorities. Survey work has already commenced, including inspections of ash in production/retail premises, recently planted sites, established woodland and at national forest inventory plots. This work will continue over the winter months. Evidence from these inspections will form part of any case to establish a pest free area.

Subject to the establishment of pest free areas, businesses producing and trading ash will need to be inspected and authorised to issue plant passports to accompany the material. This includes businesses that are already authorised to issue passports for other species, as well as businesses which are not currently authorised. This authorisation will be subject to satisfactory inspections, over and above any inspections which you may already have had this year. It is envisaged that these inspections will take place over the current autumn/winter period, to provide evidence on possible pest free area status in early 2013.

The passporting obligation applies to all businesses growing and trading ash, except retailers, landscapers, agents and others involved in supplying or moving ash for end use. However, such businesses must only use and sell passported stocks and during this period when there are no pest free areas in place they will not have access to passported material. The exemptions in the Forestry Order which apply to small quantities of ash plants imported for personal use and in relation to local circulation have been suspended. Therefore, only passported material is permitted to be moved.

Further information about *Chalara fraxinea* is available on the Forestry Commission website at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>

Yours faithfully



Martin Ward
Head of UK Plant Health Service