



**USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Pest Detection and Management Programs
4700 River Road, Unit 137
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January 12, 2004 PROGRAM UPDATE:

Ralstonia solanacearum race 3 biovar 2: New Detection

Summary

- *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 has been confirmed in United States greenhouses on geranium cuttings imported from Guatemala. The cuttings were shipped to growers between August 2003 and January 2004.
- Three varieties from one producer are suspect.
- USDA APHIS PPQ in cooperation with state departments of agriculture have begun an investigation and eradication program
- The February 2003 Action Plan developed to manage last year's *Ralstonia* introduction is not to be used to manage the current introduction. There are significant changes from last year's plan that make it unusable.

Background

In late December of 2003, a retail nursery owner in New York noticed geraniums from two varieties were wilting, and on December 31st and January 2nd APHIS made a positive confirmation of *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 in sampled plants. One of the infected varieties was direct shipped to the nursery from a producer in Guatemala and another infected variety was shipped to the nursery from a U.S. rooting station that received its stock from Guatemala. APHIS identified three other U.S. rooting facilities that received suspect varieties. More than 439 nurseries received suspect varieties directly from the producer or through rooting stations; trace forwards have not been started for material from these facilities.

The producer voluntarily quarantined its Guatemala greenhouses, and suspended shipments of geranium cuttings. APHIS notified Guatemala on January 6, 2004, that further importations of geranium cuttings from the suspect facility will be prohibited until further notice. PPQ staff will visit Guatemala this week to evaluate the facility's production systems and testing procedures and to develop a water effluent sampling procedure.

Three of the more than 30 geranium varieties are from the producer are considered suspect at this time. The suspect plants are estimated to represent approximately 2 million out of the 8.9 million total geranium cuttings shipped from this one producer to the United States since August 2003.

Control Actions

APHIS placed hold orders on geraniums at the New York nursery and the four U.S. rooting stations. Some destruction of suspect geraniums has already taken place at those facilities. In cooperation with State Departments of Agriculture, APHIS will be issuing Emergency Action Notifications to place holds on the suspect geraniums of all of these customers. Destruction of plants has been temporarily suspended as APHIS gathers more information on the situation in Guatemala. However, greenhouse owners may voluntarily destroy suspect geraniums and potentially infected plants, under PPQ supervision.

2004 Action Plan

On January 8, 2004, PDMP distributed draft versions of New Pest Response Guidelines (the "Action Plan"), Field Operations Guide and operational flowchart to all PPQ State Plant Health Directors (SPHDs) and State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPROs) for review and comments. On January 9, PDMP held a national conference call with the SPHDs and SPROs to discuss the draft documents and to address their questions and concerns about this action.

The February 2003 Action plan developed to manage last year's *Ralstonia* introduction is not to be used to manage the current introduction. The plan has been removed from the APHIS web site. The new plan will have significant changes from last year's plan that make the past version unusable but it does include destroying suspect geraniums and other potentially infected plants due to shared water or unsanitary nursery practices. The changes from the 2003 Action plan include but are not limited to:

- Definition of the basic unit of control.
- Elimination of the destruction of all plants within 1-meter of an infected shipment.
- Elimination of the Time/Temperature model for holding plants.
- Availability of a new screening test from Agdia, Inc.

Until the 2004 plan is distributed, holds may be placed but no other action taken unless authorized by program managers in the Eastern and Western Region offices.

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