

Chalara Dieback of Ash (Chalara fraxinea)

1. Overview

Chalara fraxinea is a fungal pathogen that causes dieback, lesions and ultimately death in all Ash (Fraxinus) species.

It was first identified as a serious pathogen in Poland in 1992 where it caused the loss of many Ash trees. It was first reported in the UK in Feb 2012 when it was discovered on imported trees. Since then a number of trees have been found to be infected (see map).



The pathogen is spread in the wind as fungal spores. The spores can easily travel 30 miles.

2. Identifying the pathogen

For a detailed explanation of how to identify trees that have been infected please see:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=8sI7hgFZ-4g
&
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=y1GpufLkBto

Once a tree is infected it cannot be treated.

3. Reporting the pathogen

The pathogen is being treated as a quarantine pest under national emergency measures and it is important that suspected cases of the disease are reported. Cases should be reported to one of the following:

Fera: 01904 465625;
planthealth.info@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Forestry Commission: 0131 314 6414;
plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

4. Chalara fraxinea in Birmingham

The Forestry Commission have inspected three areas within the Birmingham area this week and did not find any evidence of the pathogen. There have not been any confirmed reported cases in Birmingham to date.

Birmingham City Council does have a small number of Ash trees in storage that were purchased last year. They do not currently display any of symptoms associated with *Chalara fraxinea*. They will be checked again before being planted.

5. Potential Impact

Most of the recently planted (post 1975) woodlands that have been planted by Birmingham City Council contain approximately 10-15% Ash species and many parks and Highways contain Ash trees. Ash is the third most prolific species in the UK.

Should the pathogen become significant in Birmingham there would be a need to remove dead and dangerous trees and the trees should be replaced with a resistant Ash variety, if one is found, or an alternative species.

The Forestry Commission have been asked to estimate the probability of the pathogen having a major impact in Birmingham but they have not yet replied.

6. Action taken

The plant health warnings issued by the Forestry Commission have been circulated to the Tree Officers and Parks staff. Ash trees displaying Chalara fraxinea symptoms should be reported to the BCC, Tree Officers for verification.

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