

Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostic Standards – Meeting 19

Communiqué

The Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostic Standards (SPHDS) reports to Plant Health Committee (PHC) and provides national leadership in plant health diagnostics to sustain and improve biosecurity. SPHDS delivers on the [National Plant Biosecurity Diagnostic Strategy \(NPBDS\)](#), which aligns with Schedule 4 of the [Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity \(IGAB\)](#).

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries hosted SPHDS members and advisers at the MLC Centre, Sydney on 7-9 October 2014. Activities and outcomes since the previous meeting in May 2014 are described below against the key themes of the NPBDS.

Key outcomes

1. Developing diagnostic capability to identify High Priority Pests

- Two protocols (Huanglongbing and Mal Secco) have been endorsed by PHC as National Diagnostic Protocols (NDPs). Three protocols (American serpentine leaf miner, Russian wheat aphid and Grapevine leaf rust) are currently before PHC for endorsement. This brings the total number of [endorsed NDPs](#) to 26 (as of October 2014).
- SPHDS evaluated four protocols (Asian gypsy moth, Potato late blight, Hazelnut bud mite and Cotton leafroll dwarf virus), which will be edited and then undergo review. There are a further 60 draft protocols currently under review or in final editing.
- SPHDS acknowledges the Grains Research and Development Corporation for the provision of funds to assist the completion of NDPs for nine High Priority Pests of the grains industry.
- SPHDS identified required amendments to [Reference Standard 2](#) to provide better guidance to authors when developing generic NDPs that identify multiple closely related pests within a specific taxonomic group.

2. Enhancing the National Plant Biosecurity Diagnostic Network (NPBDN)

- The theme for the Annual Diagnosticians' Workshop (ADW) 2015 was confirmed as vector-transmitted viruses. As in previous years, professional development activities associated with the ADW will be split into two parts: (i) biology and identification of insects that transmit plant viruses (first) and (ii) insect transmitted plant viruses. The sessions will run either side of the ADW. Further information about the ADW, including details about the associated training activities, expressions of interest, dates and venue will be made available on the [NPBDN website](#) in November 2014.
- SPHDS reviewed the Laboratory Residential program. There are a number of NPBDN members who are currently participating in the program, and another round of Residentials will be supported in 2015. Information regarding this program will continue to be updated on the [NPBDN website](#).
- The National Professional Development Framework for the NPBDN was been updated with professional development activities for 2014 – 2016. A summary of activities will be made available to NPBDN members once finalised.

3. Implementing quality management systems

- Round three of the national proficiency testing program coordinated by SPHDS is underway with all specimens distributed.

- The Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries was accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) in July 2014. The scope of accreditation is available on the [NATA website](#). A total of seven Australian plant health laboratories now have accredited tests.

4. Facilitating the development of relevant national information systems that support diagnostics

- SPHDS has formed a working group to develop a strategic approach to ensuring the long-term viability of the pest reference collections that underpin diagnostics by providing authentically named specimens for unambiguous comparison. The terms of reference will include managing the current revolution in molecular phylogenetically based taxonomy; reducing the number of uncatalogued and misidentified specimens; resourcing of facilities and staff; and developing linkages between collections, diagnostic services and the Australian Plant Pest Database. The working group will have a one year timeframe with significant progress to be demonstrated by SPHDS 20, May 2015.

Other

- SPHDS finalised their input into three supporting documents for PLANTPLAN (Collection of Emergency Plant Pests, Transport of Emergency Plant Pests, and Diagnosis of Emergency Plant Pests) in preparation for provision to Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed Parties through Plant Health Australia.
- SPHDS addressed recommendations from the PHC review into its subcommittees. Recommendations include removing the term “Standards” from its name to reflect the broader role of the subcommittee in overseeing national diagnostic activities and to take over responsibility for endorsing NDPs from PHC.
- SPHDS updated and revised terms of reference, work plans and working groups to ensure alignment with the IGAB, the NPBDs and recommendations from the PHC review.
- The next scheduled face-to-face meeting of SPHDS is May 2015 in Canberra.

Further information

Further information about SPHDS and its activities can be found at the [NPBDN website](#) or provided by your [local SPHDS representative](#) or the SPHDS Executive Officer at sphds@agriculture.gov.au.

