

Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostics – Meeting 20

Communiqué

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

CSIRO hosted SPHD members, observers and advisers in Canberra, 13-14 May 2015. Activities and outcomes since the previous meeting in October 2014 are described below against the key themes of the NPBDS.

Key outcomes

1. Developing diagnostic capability to identify High Priority Pests

- Three protocols (Table 1) were endorsed by PHC. This brings the total number of endorsed National Diagnostic Protocols (NDPs) to 29 (as of May 2015).

Table 1 - endorsed NDPs

NDP No.	Scientific name of pest	Common name of pest
27	<i>Liriomyza trifolii</i>	American serpentine leaf miner
28	<i>Diuraphis noxia</i>	Russian wheat aphid
29	<i>Phakopsora euvitis</i>	Grapevine leaf rust

- Following the PHC review into its subcommittees, SPHD now has responsibility for endorsing NDPs. A process to manage endorsement has been developed and the Diagnostic Standards Working Group (DSWG) will update the reference standards to incorporate the new process.
- The DSWG assessed six protocols, which will be submitted to SPHD for endorsement as NDPs under the new process.
- The DSWG has developed improved guidance for authors of generic NDPs that identify multiple closely related pests within a specific taxonomic group. Updated Reference Standards will be placed on the [SPHD Reference Standards](#) page of the website to assist authors.
- SPHD would like to hear from plant health scientists interested in reviewing draft diagnostic protocols and laboratories interested in verifying existing international protocols (e.g. EPPO) for use under Australian conditions. Interested parties should contact the SPHD secretariat on sphds@agriculture.gov.au.

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

- SPHD assessed applications under round three of the Laboratory Residential program. There were nine applications of which five were assessed for funding. Applicants will be informed of assessment outcomes prior to 31 May and a summary of successful projects placed on the [Laboratory Residentials 2015-16](#) page of the website.
- SPHD finalised and endorsed professional development activities under a grant from the Department of Agriculture to Plant Health Australia. The plan is available on the [professional development](#) page of the website.

- The Network Implementation Working Group organised the Annual Diagnosticians' Workshop with over 60 NPBDN members participating in activities at the Australian National University, Canberra, in February 2015. The workshop report is available from the NPBDN website.

3. Implementing quality management systems

- Round three of the national proficiency testing program coordinated by SPHD through the Australian National Quality Assurance Program was completed in January 2015. Results have been forwarded to participating laboratories.

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

- SPHD progressed a framework that identifies the needs and uses of Australia's plant pest reference collections and proposes strategies for ensuring their long term viability. The framework will identify the biosecurity needs for reference collections, the range of collections required to support needs (e.g. voucher, working and digital), operational needs and uses, and resourcing and minimum standards for their maintenance. A stocktake of reference collections will be undertaken through the subcommittee in 2015. A final framework will be presented to PHC for presentation to NBC in 2015.
- The Australian Plant Pest Database (APPD) presents a consolidated view of the insect and pathogen collections held mainly by state and territory governments. The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) will be delivering this database from July 2015, and SPHD members participated in a workshop demonstrating the features of the newly developed database. SPHD representatives will continue to liaise with ALA to ensure APPD delivers the essential service to the NPBDN.

Other

- The next scheduled face-to-face meeting of SPHD is 17-18 September 2015 in Perth, following the APPS conference.

Further information

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

