

# Plum Pox Virus Detected

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the USDA, working together, have quarantined Huntington and Latimore townships in Adams County, according to Bill Kleiner, Penn State extension director/tree fruit for Adams County.

The quarantine means no transporting of plant material in or out of the townships "and that applies to homeowners, too," Kleiner said.

He said that state and federal agents are in the field working quickly to identify diseased trees before the seasonal drop-off of leaves. The virus is difficult to identify. In peaches, the symptoms appear in the first leaves to expand and consist of chlorotic vein-clearing and vein-bending, with twisting and distortion of the lamina, or tissue of the leaf.

USDA agents are also attempting to find out how the virus arrived in Adams County, Kleiner said.

He theorized that hobbyists who bud trees sometimes don't know the rules about transporting such vegetation and it's possible the disease was introduced this way. European documentation indicates the most important method of spreading the virus is by diseased plant material. It can also spread by aphids.

Lyle B. Forer, director of the state Bureau of Plant Industry, said his department has known about the problem for about a month. It took some time to identify what caused the mottling and spotting on the peaches because the tree disease had never before been seen in North America. However, the disease has been found in Chile, South America, and nearly devastated stone-fruit crops in Europe where it's been under scientific study for almost a century.

In fact, the USDA had to obtain antibodies from Europe to confirm the Adams County virus. While waiting for the antibodies, Forer said, the PDA performed "a more generic test" that gave the U.S. scientists a good idea that their fears were about to be realized.

While the outlook for growers of stonefruits such as peaches,

nectarines, plums, and apricots in Adams County is alarming, state Department of Agriculture Secretary Samuel Hayes said consumers should not be concerned because "the organism cannot be transmitted to humans. The fruit is safe for human consumption and not a concern for the consumer."

The tree is a different story, Hayes said, noting that the longer it is infected the more there will be a drop-off in fruit production.

Hayes traveled to Biglerville Monday night to meet with fruitgrowers to assure them that officials are working quickly to curtail the spread of the disease.

Hayes explained that European scientists who are experts in the virus will be invited to the United States soon to help with the problem. Hayes said it's possible some of the scientists will come from the Netherlands because that country has a stringent protocol for dealing with the virus.

Forer said Europe "spent huge amounts of money to minimize the impact to make sure the trees planted were clean and to limit distribution."

Fortunately, the strain of the virus in Adams County has been identified as the D strain, which has been described as less aggressive than other strains.

According to information supplied by Kleiner, the virus was first seen in southwest Bulgaria about 1918. Since then, the disease has been widely disseminated in planting material to most of Europe with the exception of Scandinavia.

Kleiner said that while it is still early in the investigation, if the infected trees are eradicated, the fruitgrowers, unlike the farmers who lost chickens to avian flu, will not be able to start up again in a few months. "It will take six years before a tree produces a peach," Kleiner said.



**Kutztown Area Young Farmers**  
c/o David Schantz  
1913 Woodside Avenue  
Alburtis, PA 18011-2411

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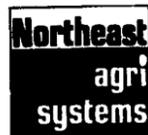
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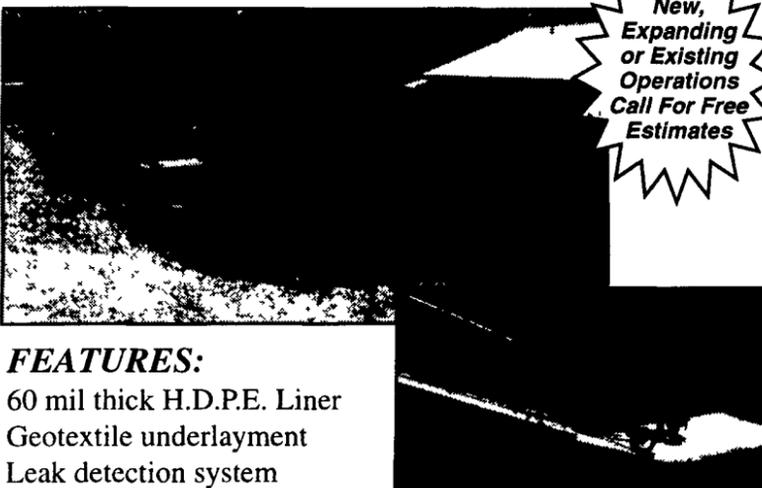
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