

Chalara ash dieback disease

Background

Chalara ash dieback disease is a relatively new serious disease of ash caused by the fungal pathogen *Chalara fraxinea*. It has spread rapidly across much of Europe, with the majority of European countries where ash is present now reporting dieback. The organism has relatively recently been identified, but its origin remains uncertain and its biology is not yet fully understood. The disease is only known to be present in Europe.

Symptoms

Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is susceptible to Chalara ash dieback disease as are a number of other species of ash. The disease can affect ash trees of any age and in any setting. Deaths can occur, with younger trees (less than 10 years old) suffering mortality more rapidly, while the infection can be chronic in older trees. The wide range of symptoms associated with Chalara ash dieback disease includes:

- **Necrotic lesions and cankers along the bark of branches or main stem (Figures 1 & 2)**
- **Foliage wilt (Figures 3 & 4)**
- **Foliage discolouration (brown/black discolouration at the base and midrib of leaves) (Figure 5)**
- **Dieback of shoots, twigs or main stem resulting in crown dieback (Figures 6 & 7)**
- **Epicormic branching or excessive side shoots along the main stem (Figure 8)**



Figures 1 & 2. Necrotic lesions / cankers

Figure 3. Foliage wilt



Figure 4. Foliage wilt



Figure 5. Foliage discolouration



Figure 6. Branch dieback



Figure 7. Crown dieback



Figure 8. Epicormic branching

Note: The symptoms described above are not exclusive to *Chalara fraxinea* and may be attributable to a number of other causal agents or factors.

Disease Pathways

Many details associated with the biology of *Chalara fraxinea* still remain unclear. However, it is likely that plants for planting and wood are pathways for spread over long distances and the disease may be introduced into Ireland through the imports of ash plants and wood, including firewood from continental European countries.

What to do

Forest owners, forest nursery staff and members of the public are asked to be vigilant for the disease and report with photographs if possible, any sites where there are concerns about unusual ill health in ash to Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine by email forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie or by phoning 01 6072651. Your report will be followed-up by a Forestry Inspector.

Please do not remove any plant material from a site containing the suspect trees.

Please also observe the following hygiene measures on sites where the disease is suspected, to help avoid any potential further spread of the disease. Footwear: Wash off all soil & plant debris from boots. Spray your boots with disinfectant and dispose of any used water onto an area where the water will not run into a watercourse. Clothing: Check all clothing for any plant material. Tools & Equipment: Wash off all soil & plant debris and disinfect and dispose of any used water onto an area where the water will not run into a watercourse.