

Forestry Commission acts on new tree disease in Cumbria

Woodland managers, landowners, the forest industry and tree nurseries are being urged to remain vigilant after the Forestry Commission (FC) and Forest Research (FR) identified the tree pathogen *Phytophthora pluvialis* in woodlands in Cumbria.

The UK Chief Plant Health Officer has confirmed the findings, following routine Forestry Commission plant health surveillance activities.

Phytophthora pluvialis is a fungus-like pathogen known to affect a variety of tree species, including western hemlock, Douglas fir, tanoak and several pine species (in particular radiata pine). It is reported to cause needle cast (where needles turn brown and fall off), shoot dieback, and lesions on the stem, branches, and roots.

Although *Phytophthora pluvialis* has been detected on mature western hemlock and Douglas-fir trees at these sites, it is as yet unknown if the pathogen is the direct cause of the observed symptoms. Investigations are ongoing to determine whether other factors are at play.

Forestry Commission, Forest Research and the Animal and Plant Health Agency are rapidly conducting further surveillance and diagnostic analysis to understand more about the pathogen and ensure that any required control measures are swiftly undertaken to stop its spread.

Nicola Spence, the UK Chief Plant Health Officer, said:

We are taking swift and robust action against this finding of *Phytophthora pluvialis*, as part of our well-established biosecurity protocol used for tree pests and diseases.

I urge all sectors to support efforts to tackle this pathogen by checking the health of western hemlock and Douglas-fir trees. [Key symptoms](#) to look for are lesions on the stem, branch or roots. Any sightings should be reported to the Forestry Commission via its [TreeAlert online portal](#).

Given the recent finding, the Forestry Commission will introduce a demarcated area in Cumbria to help prevent the accidental movement of the pathogen. A [Notice](#) will come into force on Friday 26th November.

Further information on tree pests and diseases, and how to identify them, is available [here](#).

Landowners are asked to report any suspect trees via [TreeAlert](#).