

Red Band Needle Blight in Britain

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Abstract – Red Band Needle Blight is caused by the pathogens *Dothistroma septosporum* and *Dothistroma pini*. Until recently the disease was primarily of concern in the Southern Hemisphere, particularly on radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*). However, since the 1990's there has been an increase in disease incidence in Europe, mainly on sub-species of black pine (*Pinus nigra*) and also on lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta* ssp. *latifolia*) in Canada.

In Britain the disease was first recorded in 1954 on pine nursery stock in Dorset. Disease outbreaks reoccurred sporadically at the same location until 1966 and there were two occurrences in Wales on plantation trees in 1958 and 1989. However, apart from these records there were no reports of the disease the late 1990s. Since then, the incidence of the disease in Britain has increased markedly, particularly on Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra* spp. *laricio*), with 20 reports of the disease between 1997 and 2002.

As a result of the increase in disease reports, in 2006 all Corsican pine stands under the age of 30 years on the Forestry Commission estate were assessed for disease incidence. The survey revealed that the disease was present in all Forest Districts surveyed in England and Wales and half of those assessed in Scotland. Overall, the disease was found to be present in 71% of the stands assessed covering a total of 7,051 hectares. The disease was also reported on a further 13 pine species in Great Britain during this survey, with lodgepole pine the second most frequently infected species. The increased incidence of the disease has resulted in a five year moratorium on the planting of Corsican pine, one of the most important softwood timber species grown in southern Britain. The threat this disease poses to lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta latifolia*) which is grown mainly in Scotland, is also of concern.

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