



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Department of Primary Industries

Friday, 23 January, 2009

LOCAL WORKERS VITAL IN TACKLING POTATO PEST

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries today thanked members of the local community for their hard work and contribution in tackling potato cyst nematode (PCN) at Thorpdale.

“When potato cyst nematode (PCN) was detected in October 2008, DPI faced a massive operation of soil sampling and testing,” DPI Plant Standards Officer David Beardsell said.

“Soil had to be sampled on a grid of every five to 10 metres over the entire potato cropping area in Thorpdale to determine the spread of PCN in the area.

“In addition, local potato growers were anxiously waiting on the results of the survey to determine their market access for this season’s crop.

“To complete this daunting task as soon as possible, DPI recruited 24 people from Traralgon and nearby districts to assist with the sampling.”

Dr Beardsell said the local recruits had made a vital contribution to the excellent progress made with the sampling task.

“In just over two months, our teams have completed the required sampling of about 2,900 hectares around Thorpdale, by taking more than 550,000 soil cores,” Dr Beardsell said.

“Thorpdale is a very hilly area and we’d like to publicly congratulate these workers on their efficiency and persistence in what was a physically demanding and repetitive task.”

Dr Beardsell added that there are still many hectares to be sampled in other parts of Victoria, and in other states, which are linked to the paddock where the detection was made – and some of the local workers will continue to be involved in the remaining Victorian sampling.

“Laboratory testing of the samples by DPI scientists is a more time-consuming task than soil sampling and will most likely take two more months to complete,” Dr Beardsell said.

“Soil samples must be washed and sieved, then examined for the presence of the pinhead-sized PCN cysts. The scientists have a very different but equally demanding task, and their skills and dedication have also been first-class.”

The Thorpdale area produces about 20% of Victoria’s potatoes. It is also a major potato seed production area for the entire Australian potato industry.

Photo caption:

Long rows to hoe - A DPI inspector taking soil core samples in the hills of Thorpdale.

Media contact: Alan Everett on 9658 4092 or 0409 255 140