



Media Release

From the Department of Primary Industries

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PROMISING START IN EFFORTS TO CONTROL POTATO PEST

In a promising start to the efforts to contain the Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN) in the Thorpdale district, soil samples taken from five properties directly linked to the initial outbreak have proved negative.

At the same time, authorities in Thailand have agreed to allow the importation of 188 tonnes of seed potatoes from another nearby property to proceed.

That consignment, worth an estimated \$200,000, was originally scheduled for destruction by the Thai quarantine authorities but a repeat test on the soil from that property also proved negative.

Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) scientists have collected hundreds of soil samples from properties in an effort to define the potential extent of the control area surrounding the primary property.

DPI Principal Plant Standards Policy Officer David Beardsell said that the high priority now is to test properties in the region to ensure the growers continue to have access to interstate and international markets.

He said it's still not clear how the pest made it to the infested paddock.

"PCN can be transferred on machinery, bins or seed potatoes and because it can survive for up to 30 years in soil, it is most likely that it was in the paddock for many years before being detected during routine testing last month," Dr Beardsell said.

PCN is a microscopic, worm-like organism which feeds on the roots of potatoes and can reduce crop yields.

It is found in potato-growing areas around the world.

The first detection of PCN in Australia was in Western Australia in 1983; it was first found in Victoria at Wandin in 1991.

PCN is not a human health issue.

For information about the movement of potato plant material, machinery and other equipment, please contact DPI Plant Standards on (03) 8371 3500 or plant.standards@dpi.vic.gov.au

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