



Media release

The Place To Be

From the Department of Primary Industries

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WARRAGUL POTATO GROWERS UPGRADE PEST PROTECTION

New biosecurity measures aimed at safeguarding markets for the Victorian potato industry will take effect in the Warragul area during April 2008.

Potato growers in the area will operate within a Plant Protection District, designed to reduce the risk of the pest Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN) threatening their crops.

The new Warragul Plant Protection District will be administered by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). David Beardsell, DPI's Principal Plant Standards Policy Officer, said the controls were requested by Warragul growers to protect their valuable industry, their customers and their suppliers from the threat of PCN.

"The new regulations are designed to ensure PCN does not enter the region," said Dr Beardsell.

The establishment of the Warragul Plant Protection District is part of the DPI plant biosecurity program, which aims to protect Victorian plant industries from pests and diseases and to enhance market access. The Victorian potato industry has an annual value of \$130 million.

The Warragul Plant Protection District is the third such area to be declared in Victoria. It will have the same status as those previously established at Portland and Colac-Otway.

PCN is found in potato-growing areas around the world, including a limited number of locations in Victoria. It feeds on the roots of potato plants and can seriously affect crop yields and marketability. PCN does not pose any risk to human health.

"Being declared a Plant Protection District means that movements into the area of potatoes for planting, agricultural equipment used in potato production, and used potato bins or bags, are subject to a number of conditions and are regulated by DPI's Plant Standards Branch," said Dr Beardsell.

"Road signs will shortly be erected on the borders of the District to remind business operators of these conditions.

"Potatoes for human consumption are exempt from the entry requirements."

The Warragul region produces high-quality certified seed potatoes and is remote from PCN-affected areas. Dr Beardsell said that potato growers in the region have been testing for PCN since 1992, with no detections of the pest recorded.

For further information, please contact David Beardsell at DPI Knoxfield; telephone (03) 9210 9425.

Photo caption:

Road signs will remind travellers when they are entering the Plant Protection District.

Map caption:

The new Warragul Plant Protection District (shaded area).

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