

Russian wheat aphid crosses into Victoria

Keiron Costello - Friday, June 10, 2016

The Russian wheat aphid has been confirmed by biosecurity officials to have moved from South Australia to Victoria.

As first reported on [ABC Rural](#), the wheat pest was found in Tarlee in South Australia earlier this week, the first time it has been detected in Australia.

The Russian aphid is a serious pest to cereal crops in the major cereal production areas of the world except Australia – until now. [Primary Industries & Regions SA](#) (PIRSA) explains that the aphid injects toxins into the plant that stunt growth and can potentially kill the plant. The affected plants exhibit whitish, yellow and red features and rolling leaves.



The aphid was first confirmed in South Australia on 2 June, but since spreading to Victoria authorities have commented that there is no chance to eradicate it, per [The Weekly Times](#).

Interestingly, farm consultant Simon Monk spoke to [ABC Rural](#) about the delayed response of authorities to confirm the pest's presence in Victoria. He said a sample was sent to Agriculture Victoria by one of his clients.

"I'd suspect that there's probably enough information out there currently to make a quicker assessment."

The \$1.6 billion dollar wheat industry can expect quite a hit from the aphid, particularly if it keeps spreading at the rate it already has. The [NSW Department of Primary Industries](#) website notes that yield losses overseas have totalled up to 80 per cent in wheat and 100 per cent in barley. Its spread can be quite fierce, as [The Weekly Times](#) reports – the affected area has risen from 20 square kilometres when it was first discovered to 5000 square kilometres now.

A spokeswoman for PIRSA also believes that infestation wouldn't have been the result of a single introduction of the species, and that it may have blown across from our oversea neighbours.

A national response is being drawn up to combat the national threat, as biosecurity's SA's executive director Will Zacharin explained to ABC Rural.

“As we expand our surveillance we are finding more of these aphids in areas quite a fair way away, like 15 kilometres away, from the original infected property.”

However, Mr. Zacharin noted to ABC Rural that as authorities expand their search they'd likely find more.

Dr Gabrielle Vivan-Smith spoke in The Weekly Times of the emergency permit which has been issued to use pirimicarb and chlorpyrifos products to combat the spread of the aphid.

“We have posted a copy of a permit on our website to authorize grain growers to use specific chemicals to control Russian wheat aphid,” said Dr. Vivan-Smith.

“If farmers make the decision to spray they should adhere to all general chemical use practices.”

By Callum Coleman