



EASTERN PLANT BOARD

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Rebecca Bech, Deputy Administrator
USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Washington DC

Dear Rebecca,

At the recent Eastern Plant Board meeting in Portland, Maine, we had a discussion on the Chrysanthemum white rust situation. This discussion followed a series of discussions held at the National Plant Board's Annual Meeting with representatives from the Eastern Region and industry.

Chrysanthemum white rust has been very problematic in the last few years in Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic States when it appears on garden mums at the retail level. This has led to a nearly annual deployment of scarce state and federal personnel resources to conduct trace back / trace forward surveys and investigations, financial losses to growers and disruptions in the marketing chain. Particularly frustrating is that the diseased material often cannot be successfully traced back to infected material at a producer's or propagator's growing operation.

It is our understanding that an economic assessment of Chrysanthemum white rust is currently being prepared by APHIS PPQ's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology. An up to date economic assessment is critical to the discussion and development of policy decisions on regulating the disease.

The EPB is requesting that APHIS PPQ complete and release the economic assessment of Chrysanthemum white rust prior the NPB Annual Meeting in August, so that discussions can move forward, and an updated policy can be put into place before this fall's garden mum crop is marketed. We also push for the deployment of diagnostic tools to detect Chrysanthemum white rust in propagative material.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Gibson, President
Eastern Plant Board

cc: Paula Henstridge
Philip Berger