

SUBJECT: *Ralstonia solanacearum* Race 3 Biovar 2 in a Florida Nursery

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

PPQ has confirmed *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 in geranium samples taken from a greenhouse in Quincy, Florida on September 10, 2004. Subsequent tests of water samples taken from a retention pond also tested positive. APHIS and State officials are collaborating on developing a response plan and are evaluating the methodology and interpretation of past tests conducted at this facility. The plants have now been traced back to Mexico, but it is unclear at this time if Mexico was the actual source of the infestation. No geraniums remain at the facility (1500 have been destroyed), and the facility has been sanitized. None of the geraniums or other plants in the facility was distributed beyond Florida. The facility is currently under a hold order. PPQ is completing additional testing (by PCR) to determine the extent of the infestation. No other nurseries have reported wilted geraniums at this time anywhere in the US. PPQ is convening a science panel to evaluate potential testing and mitigation measures.

Ralstonia solanacearum race 3, biovar 2 (Rsr3b2) is a bacterial pathogen that causes wilt in geraniums and is highly destructive to potatoes, tomatoes, and a few other solanaceous vegetables. While race 1 of *Ralstonia solanacearum* is endemic to the United States, Rsr3b2 is not. This strain is cited in USDA's regulations implementing the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002 Select Agents and Toxins list. APHIS is following select agent communications standard operating procedures.

In 2003 and 2004, APHIS, in cooperation with State departments of agriculture, eradicated the pathogen in geraniums imported from Kenya and Guatemala. Eradication efforts included finding and destroying over 4 million plants (geraniums and additional potentially contaminated plants) in nurseries throughout the United States. Current efforts are focused on strengthening procedures for offshore geranium production through a certification and testing program. It is important to note, however, that the recent and similar detections in geraniums have all appeared as unintentional introductions of the pathogen.

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