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## Association supports Oregon action against California, encourages USDA to put more teeth in federal response

*Nearly 60 plant species are affected by regulation on imports*

Late yesterday, the Oregon Department of Agriculture acted to keep the fungus-like pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum* out of Oregon by imposing an emergency quarantine regulation aimed at California nursery stock shipments. *Phytophthora ramorum* can produce cankers and leaf blight in some plants. Some oak tree species in California have proved to be particularly vulnerable. Oregon White Oak, the state's most common oak tree, is unaffected by the plant disease.

"Oregon has a lot at stake and the Oregon Association of Nurseries fully supports ODA Director Katy Coba's decision to implement this emergency action," said Mac McCarter, OAN president. "This action protects the industry's 9,500 full-time jobs and the \$233 million payroll that goes with those jobs. Failure to act could result in business failure, lost jobs and severely harm the Willamette Valley's many family farms."

ODA's action will limit movement of 59 nursery plant species, many of which are economically important to the nursery industry and are well known to Oregon's gardeners. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has identified these 59 plant species as potential "hosts and associated hosts" for the plant pathogen *P. ramorum*. A list of host and associated host plants can be found at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which is available at the following Web site: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ispm/sod/>.

ODA's emergency regulation prohibits California nurseries from shipping these regulated plant species into Oregon, unless the nurseries and individual shipments of plants comply with specific requirements:

- The nursery has undergone an annual inspection for the presence of *P. ramorum* (to include testing of host and associated host plants);
- Each shipment of host and associated host plants destined for Oregon must be inspected prior to shipment (if symptomatic plants are found, then samples must be collected and tested and found free of *P. ramorum*);
- Shipments of nursery stock must have an official certificate verifying the plants meet quarantine requirements, and;
- Receivers in Oregon of the regulated plants must notify the ODA of the arrival of shipment.

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## News Release

The emergency quarantine applies to all parts of California and is effective for up to 90 days, which covers the latter portion of the spring shipping season, the industry's busiest time for moving nursery stock.

Nurseries in 12 California counties where natural forests are affected by the pathogen have been following the more stringent shipping guidelines for some time. "The requirements are not onerous," said John Aguirre, OAN executive director. "Oregon nurseries could live by this standard."

Now, all of California will have to meet the testing requirements. The key is having a system of annual testing of nursery properties so that, with a clean bill of health, nurseries do not have to hold up individual shipments for testing.

"ODA's action is a comment on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's failure to aggressively intervene and stop the spread of this plant disease. Because of USDA's lackluster response, 12 states erected quarantines in one form or another aimed at California," Aguirre said. "Oregon joins the ranks of states who believe USDA needs to do more."

Before Oregon issued its emergency quarantine regulation, a total of 11 states — Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Tennessee, Utah, Washington and West Virginia — and Canada had some type of quarantine regulation aimed at California in effect.

USDA previously announced it would impose a federal quarantine on all of California effective March 29 of this year. But, the department has since backtracked and it is unclear when the department will impose a comprehensive federal regulatory response.

"This issue is a text book example of why strong federal regulation is needed," Aguirre said. "USDA's anemic response has pushed several states to action, resulting in closed borders and undermining the free flow of commerce, which is absolutely critical to this industry."

McCarter added, "I can't understand USDA's inattention to this issue. Nationwide, we are talking about an industry with a farm gate value of \$14 billion. If growers can't ship product to retailers across the country, then you destroy the foundation of the industry."

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*The Oregon Association of Nurseries, based in Wilsonville, represents more than 1,600 wholesale growers, retailers, landscapers and suppliers. Oregon's ornamental horticulture industry is the state's largest agricultural commodity, with 2002 sales of \$727 million.*