



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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and Rural Affairs
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10 December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Rapid Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) on *Melittomma sericeum*

I am writing to seek your views on a UK Pest Risk Analysis for *Melittomma sericeum*. A link to the rapid PRA can be found at the website given below:

<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/pests-and-diseases/pest-risk-analyses/>

We would welcome your views and comments on the PRA and the proposals for future action.

In submitting any comments you may wish to focus on the summary, key uncertainties and conclusion sections of the risk assessments and to consider the following:

- Are any factual corrections required?
- Your view on the appropriateness of the suggested proposals for future actions?
- Can you provide any additional information (or links to other sources of information) that may help address uncertainty identified in the assessment/management measures?
- Are there any risks that have not been adequately considered?
- Have you reviewed the risk assessment and consider that you have nothing further to add?

This review applies to the UK and is being conducted by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, with the agreement of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Government. The objective of this consultation is to gather views from all interested sectors on the UK position. We will take all comments made into account in developing the UK position.



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Background

Melittomma sericeum (Coleoptera: Lymexylidae) or chestnut timberworm is a wood boring beetle native to North America (USA and Canada). Before the 1900s, *M. sericeum* was deemed a damaging pest of American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) affecting timber quality. Since the introduction of chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) and the dramatic decline in American chestnut, *M. sericeum* has become less notable, hosting primarily on dead wood of white oak (*Quercus alba*) and causing little to no impact.

This PRA was initiated to investigate risk after a German NPPO PRA rated the phytosanitary risk of this pest as high for all EU member states. *Melittomma sericeum* is not listed in the EU plant health legislation and is not recommended for regulation as a quarantine pest by EPPO, nor is it on the EPPO Alert List.

The primary pathway of entry identified is timber which is rated as moderately likely with medium confidence, due to the known association of this beetle with the heart- and sapwood of trees and the high volume of trade of sawn hardwood from the USA. The pathway of wood packaging material was rated as unlikely with medium confidence. While both wood pathways experience high trade, they are subject to phytosanitary measures that would limit pest association. The remaining pathways of plants for planting and cut branches were both rated as very unlikely with high confidence, as trade in these commodities from North America is either prohibited or very low volume.

Outdoor establishment is assessed as unlikely due to the difference between the pest's native climate and the UK climate, and the limited presence of known hosts in the PRA area. However, confidence level is low due to a lack of data regarding host suitability and lifecycle requirements. Spread is rated as slow for both natural spread and via trade, with low confidence as there is limited data on spread capability and presence of pest in trade.

If damage to UK tree species is similar to American chestnut, timber being produced would be degraded and cause significant commercial losses. However, this is doubtful as current impacts are limited to dead/decaying white oak logs and damage to UK hosts is thought to be unlikely. Economic impact is rated as small with low confidence, due to limited data on suitability of hosts. Similarly, environmental and social impacts are rated as small with medium confidence, as limited damage has been reported in the beetle's current range.

There is no suggested endangered area as *M. sericeum* is not expected to cause an unacceptable level of damage where it could establish.

Whilst the pest is not present in the PRA area, continued exclusion is preferable, due to the uncertainty over the susceptibility of tree species in the UK. Current import regulations for plants for planting, timber and wood packaging material are considered sufficient to limit the likelihood of introduction.

If *M. sericeum* did enter the PRA area, measures for control would be similar to that of other wood-boring beetles, such as felling and removal of infested trees, and surveillance

for adults. Other methods may include limiting fires and other causes of wounds/lesions that may be used as oviposition sites.

Recommendations for action

Chestnut and oak tree species in the UK are not expected to experience damage similar to that of American chestnut and impacts would likely be small. Therefore, the recommendation is to not regulate *Melittomma sericeum* and not require statutory action in response to an interception or finding.

All responses should be sent to plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk

Responses should be received by **4 March 2025**.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be made available to the public on request, in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs)

If you do not wish your response, including your name, contact details and any other personal information, to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note that if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, this will not count as a confidentiality request. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for the information under freedom of information legislation. However, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

Yours faithfully,

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