



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Proposal to deregulate tomato ringspot virus (*Nepovirus lycopersici*) on *Prunus* - propagating material of ornamental plants and other plants for planting intended for ornamental planting

November 2024

## Objective

To review the status of tomato ringspot virus in GB legislation.

## Assessment

The following is a summary of an assessment undertaken by Defra following the method outlined by EPPO (European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation) (Picard *et al.*, 2017).

# Regulated non-quarantine pest (RNQP) assessment for Great Britain: tomato ringspot virus (*Nepovirus lycopersici*) on *Prunus* - propagating material of ornamental plants and other plants for planting intended for ornamental planting

## Background

Tomato ringspot virus (also known as *Nepovirus lycopersici* or ToRSV) is currently an RNQP (Regulated Non-Quarantine Pest) for GB (Great Britain), but the listed hosts concerning this pest needed a review. The pest has a scattered worldwide distribution, with most impacts occurring in North America where the nematode vectors are widespread.

## Current listing of pest in GB legislation

RNQP for GB

## Current regulated plants for planting – host plants

*Pelargonium*; *Prunus*; *Rubus*; *Malus*

## Taxonomy

### Pest name

*Nepovirus lycopersici*; tomato ringspot virus; ToRSV; TomRSV

### Will the pest be listed at species level?

Yes

## Status in GB

### Is this pest present in GB?

Yes: There is a long history of ToRSV causing symptomless findings of infection on *Pelargonium* (geranium) stocks in the UK, with unpublished records beginning in 1979 and the most recent survey being from 2003 (Defra, unpublished data). The results of the most recent survey did indicate that levels of viral contamination had dropped, but there is no evidence that ToRSV has ever been fully eradicated from *Pelargonium* (especially since the virus can be transmitted via seed and pollen in *Pelargonium*, Scarborough & Smith, 1977).

## Pathways

### Are the listed plants for planting the main pathway for the "pest/host/intended use" combination?

Yes: ToRSV is primarily spread by nematodes in the *Xiphinema americanum sensu lato* complex. These vectors of ToRSV are not known to occur in the UK, though the rapid PRA for these nematodes (Fera, 2014 unpublished) acknowledged that some populations may have been inadvertently imported in large, containerised plants. If nematode vectors were to enter, they are very likely to be able to establish both outdoors and in protected conditions.

The virus is not thought to be seed transmitted with woody hosts.

Plants for planting, via propagating/grafting, is considered the main means of spread on *Prunus*.

## Economic Impact

### Are there documented reports of any economic impact on the host?

(On *Prunus* fruit crops - Yes)

On *Prunus* ornamental plants – No evidence was found on impacts to species used as ornamental plants (e.g. *Prunus laurocerasus*, *P. lusitanica* and *P. spinosa*). No evidence was found on impacts more generally to ornamental *Prunus* plants.

**As there are no notable economic impacts, the assessment stopped, and it is proposed that *Prunus* plants intended for propagating material of ornamental plants and other plants for planting intended for ornamental purposes are no longer listed as requiring to be free from tomato ringspot virus.**

## Proposal for deregulation

We propose to remove propagating material of ornamental plants and other plants for planting intended for ornamental purposes of *Prunus* species as hosts of ToRSV, by amending Annex 4, Part C, and Annex 5, Part C, of the Phytosanitary Conditions Regulation<sup>1</sup>. As a result, these plants would no longer need to be free from TRSV to be imported into, or moved within, Great Britain.

## References

Picard C., Ward M., Benko-Beloglavec A., Matthews- Berry S., Karadjova O., Pietsch M. & Van Der Gaag D. J. (2017) A methodology for preparing a list of recommended regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQPs). *EPPO Bulletin*, 47: 551–558. <https://doi.org/10.1111/epp.12420>

Scarborough, B. A. & Smith, S. H. (1977) Effects of Tobacco- and Tomato Ringspot Viruses on the reproductive tissues of *Pelargonium x hortorum*. *Phytopathology* 67: 292-297.

## Name of Pest Risk Analyst

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<sup>1</sup> [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2072 of 28 November 2019 establishing uniform conditions for the implementation of Regulation \(EU\) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards protective measures against pests of plants, and repealing Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 690/2008 and amending Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2018/2019](#)

This regulation proposal has been undertaken taking into account the environmental principles laid out in the Environment Act 2021. Of particular relevance are:

- The prevention principle, which means that any policy or action taken, or not taken should aim to prevent environmental harm.
- The precautionary principle, which assists the decision-making process where there is a lack of scientific certainty.