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Australia approves National Diagnostic Protocol (NDP) for Pine-wood nematode

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AÂ National Diagnostic Protocol (NDP) for Pine-wood nematodeÂ *(Bursaphelenchus xylophilus)Â* has been endorsed by the Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostics (SPHD) for use in the event of an incursion, providing a critical tool in the protection of Australiaâ??s forestry industries.

Native to North America, the Pine-wood nematode is a microscopic worm that causes pine wilt disease by attacking pine trees and other conifers. Not currently present in Australia, this devastating pest has caused widespread and serious damage in countries where it has been accidentally introduced.

The endorsed NDP equips diagnosticians, biosecurity personnel, and industry representatives with a standardised and reliable method for Pine-wood nematode diagnosis and detection. This NDP plays a crucial role in early detection and effective management of this pest, and is a vital tool to safeguard our forestry industries as well as our amenity and environmental plantings to maintain market access for Australian forestry products.

The development of this NDP was a collaborative effort between various groups over many years. In particular, substantial groundwork was undertaken by CSIRO in taxonomy, techniques, obtaining reference specimens and diagnostic images, which represent a significant portion of the protocolâ??s development. The finalisation of the protocol was made possible through funding provided under the Rural R&D for Profit Boosting diagnostic capacity for plant production industries project, with national endorsement of this protocol obtained through SPHD.

The milestone represents significant collaboration and investment happening in Australia's plant biosecurity research.