

Nevada Department of Agriculture News Release



**For Immediate Release
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Canary Island Date Palm Wilt Disease Officially Found in Las Vegas

A diseased palm sample submitted to the Plant Pathology Laboratory has confirmed to be infected with a fungus called *Fusarium oryспорum* f.sp. *Canariensis*. The specific strain infects especially Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) and also all species of Phoenix date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*). The disease caused by this strain is called Canary Island Date Palm Wilt (also called "Fusarium wilt"). It is one of the most destructive palm diseases and is incurable. Infected trees may decline for several years until they become eventually dead.

This is not the first case from Las Vegas palm trees. In 1997, University of Florida Plant Diagnostic Lab also tested two palm samples from Las Vegas with a positive result. However, since 2000, we tested all palm samples submitted from Las Vegas, and this is the first positive case identified in our laboratory.

Coincidentally, report of this palm wilt disease in California is increasing, according to recent press release from California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers. California Department of Food and Agriculture has established a protective quarantine to protect uninfected areas. Considering palm trees installed in Las Vegas are mostly (if not all) imported from California and other states, an increased scrutiny into the shipment of palm trees and nursery stocks for the disease is recommended to prevent introduction of this disease.

The major mode of spread is through contaminated pruning tools or equipment. Landscape professionals are strongly encouraged to sterilize their tools before pruning each tree. A proven sterilization method is soaking tools in a 25% of household bleach solution or 70% rubbing alcohol for at least 5 minutes.

To minimize the impact of the disease on palm trees in Las Vegas, industry professionals and property owners are encouraged to report any suspicious trees and submit samples to the Nevada Department of Agriculture for testing. For complete instruction on taking a correct sample, please visit http://agri.nv.gov/Plant_PDF/2008/MonitoringFusariumWiltOfCanaryIslandDatePalm.pdf.

The Department's Plant Pathology Laboratory is one of a few plant diagnostic laboratories with the capability to identify this specific strain of the pathogen. Once a tree is proven to be positive, the client will be given an instruction on how to prevent further spread of the disease.

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