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INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON DOTHISTROMA NEEDLE BLIGHT

In early August, Lindsay Bulman attended the first Annual Workshop, Working Group Meetings, and Management Committee Meeting of DIAROD (Determining Invasiveness and Risk of *Dothistroma*) COST Action in Aberdeen. COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a long running European framework supporting cooperation among scientists and researchers across Europe. New Zealand researchers have the opportunity to participate if their institution is accepted by COST as a non-COST institution. Scion was listed in the DIAROD Action and Lindsay's visit was funded through a scheme funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand.

The first day was devoted to hearing about the status of dothistroma needle blight (DNB) with presentations from Working Group One: "The Pathogen: defining the current disease situation" led by Jan Stenlid from Sweden and Irene Barnes from South Africa; and Working Group Two: "The Environment: determining the risk of DNB" led by Julio J Diez Casero of Spain and Lindsay Bulman. *Dothistroma* is being found in more locations in the Baltic countries and the severity of the disease is increasing in some. This sparked an interesting discussion on how long the pathogen had been present in those countries with one school saying a very long time but conditions are now more favourable for disease development so we are now seeing it, while others were suggesting that the pathogen was a more recent introduction. Irene Barnes presented an interesting talk on the possible evolutionary origins of *Dothistroma* and Alex Woods talked about the influence of weather on the outbreaks of dothistroma needle blight in British Columbia.

The field trip highlighted clearly that *Dothistroma* is able to cause serious damage in situations where there is a favourable host and environment. Some stands planted with inland provenances of lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta* var. *latifolia*) suffered severe mortality (see photo), necessitating felling and replanting with less susceptible species. The disease is less severe on the wetter west coast, demonstrating that serious disease may only occur when a complex of factors align (i.e., pathogen, weather, susceptible host, overstocking, unsuitable site for the host). New Zealand foresters should be reassured that often it is possible to manipulate factors so that extremely favourable conditions for disease are avoided.

Lindsay Bulman



Dead lodgepole pines in a stand affected by dothistroma needle blight, highlighted against the Scottish midsummer sky.

MARGARET DICK – PLANT PROTECTION MEDAL

The New Zealand Plant Protection Society bestowed its highest honour on forest pathologist Margaret Dick at its annual conference held in August in Nelson.

Margaret was presented with the Plant Protection Society medal to honour her extensive contribution to disease management and biosecurity in the forestry sector. Margaret joined the Forest Research Institute in 1972 and specialized in diagnosing disorders of forest trees. There are few people in the country who can match her knowledge of exotic tree diseases.

Just some of her career highlights include helping nursery and forest managers to decrease the costs and risks associated with major forest diseases. Margaret also contributes to the protection of urban and native trees through her work on technical advisory groups for Dutch elm disease and kauri dieback.

For 20 years Margaret has represented New Zealand on the Australasian Research Working Group 7 – Forest Health, where threats to both countries and common issues of forest health are discussed and information is shared. In her spare time, she is heavily involved with activities in her local Forest & Bird branch.

In addition to all this, Margaret was also one of the key people who made a discovery that potentially saved the country millions of dollars.

While undertaking routine lab work in 2003, she recognized that a *Fusarium* colony growing on an agar plate isolated from quarantine material could have been the causal organism of pitch canker disease of pines. Sure enough, *Fusarium circinatum* was detected, the trees being held in quarantine were destroyed and a potentially devastating organism was prevented from entering New Zealand.

Over her career Margaret has been involved in research on several serious canker and needle diseases of *Pinus radiata*.

She described two new *Phytophthora* species that were unusual because they are found in the crowns of eucalypts. She has also overseen and guided the research of numerous younger pathologists. Despite this outstanding career, Margaret was unaware that she had even been nominated for the award, and so the announcement came as quite a surprise.

When she received the award Margaret noted that there were plenty of other people working in plant protection who would have been deserving recipients and that she felt privileged to receive the medal because it was a huge honour.

Congratulations Margaret. You thoroughly deserve the recognition.

John Bain

