

Hygiene best practice

As the virus is primarily transmitted via contact, a suite of prophylactic measures termed 'hygiene best practice' should be followed to minimise the chances of the virus entering and spreading within a crop. These precautions should be applied routinely. This list is not exhaustive but gives measures recommended to minimise the risk of spread of contact transmitted pathogens including other viruses and viroids.

- **Restrict access to the place of production:** access should be limited to people working in the specific crop/glasshouse. This will minimise the risk of inadvertent introduction and spread around the glasshouse production facility via human activity. Additionally, as a standard, there should be no direct travel between packhouses and glasshouses on the same day. Clothing must be changed/washed between the two locations if entering on different days.
- **Prohibit sorting/packing of produce from other locations:** If infected produce goes through a packing facility, both machinery, equipment, and workers can be contaminated. If these workers or equipment are then moved into a production facility this can spread the virus into a previously healthy crop.
- **Train staff to recognise plant diseases and to employ best practice for a high health crop:** staff should be trained in basic symptom recognition and hygiene measures to contain outbreaks of pathogens when they occur, including best practice for plant handling etc.
- **Limit movement of staff between facilities:** Ideally staff should not be moving between production facilities and should never move between packing and production facilities
- **Prohibit consumption susceptible hosts on the premises:** growers and employees eating fruit of tomato and pepper which may be contaminated could inadvertently pass on the virus.
- **Washing of hands:** Staff should wash hands using soap before entering and on leaving a glasshouse.
- **Use disposable gloves:** Disposable gloves should be used and changed as often as necessary.
- **Use disposable clothes and overshoes:** Workers should use disposable clothing, such as a disposable over-suit and shoe covers, to minimise introduction and spread of the pathogen. These should be put on when entering a glasshouse and should be disposed off on leaving the glasshouse and not reused. If this is not feasible for full-time staff, then they should be issued clothing to wear only in the glasshouse which is then regularly laundered at high temperature. Growers could use clothing in different colours to denote workers from different parts of the site to prevent cross contamination.
- **Cleaning and disinfection of equipment and tools:** Equipment and tools which come into contact with an infected plant can act as a source of virus for onward transmission. Equipment such as picking carts, sprayers, and hand tools (e.g. pruning knives) should all be cleaned and disinfected routinely. Tools should ideally be disinfected during pruning activities between individual plants. Equipment should be cleaned and disinfected at least between crops.

In the event of an outbreak

Advisory Information

The main advice to growers and packhouse personnel is to implement good hygiene measures as a matter of course, be vigilant for any unusual symptoms in the crop, and report any symptoms to managers if suspected.

Suspected outbreaks of a viroid or virus in a tomato crop or any other non-native plant pest should be reported to the relevant authority:

- For England and Wales, contact your local APHA Plant Health and Seeds Inspector or the PHSI Headquarters, Sand Hutton, York
 - Tel: 01904 405138
 - Email: planthealth.info@apha.gsi.gov.uk
- For Scotland, contact the Scottish Government's Horticulture and Marketing Unit:
 - Email: hrt.marketing@gov.scot
- For Northern Ireland, contact the DAERA Plant Health Inspection Branch:
 - Tel: 0300 200 7847
 - Email: planthealth@daera-ni.gov.uk

For additional information on UK Plant Health please see:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phiw/riskRegister/>

<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/plant-health-controls>

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/plant/PlantHealth/PlantDiseases>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk>

This information was collated by Adrian Fox from Fera.