



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

---

Hansard 13 May 2003

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.08 a.m.): Last week a second detection of the wheat streak mosaic virus occurred in Queensland. This detection at the Wellcamp Research Station followed the discovery of the virus at the Leslie Research Centre in Toowoomba the previous week. The wheat streak mosaic virus has been detected in research facilities in the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and now Queensland.

This virus is exotic to Australia. It infects wheat as well as barley, maize, oats and rye, and some pasture and weed grasses. The virus can cause plant stunting, tissue breakdown and death of infected leaves, resulting in reduced seed set and lower seed weight. To spread the virus from plant to plant there must be a significant population of the leaf curl mite, which is found widely in the Australian cereal belt.

Symptoms of WSMV include light green to yellow streaking in the leaves of infected plants. Green and yellow patches in the streaks appear as a pattern called a mosaic. As the disease worsens, the affected tissues may die. The affected plants found in Queensland were from a single wheat breeding line. They are not planted commercially and have been destroyed. Samples from the Hermitage Research Station near Warwick and research plots in Kingsthorpe and Gatton are being tested as part of the national delimiting survey. At this stage there have been no further positive detections.

As a government we are committed to ensuring that there is minimal disruption to our cereal breeding programs, including research into drought, pest and disease resistance. These programs have been temporarily put on hold until investigations conclude. Our department was actively participating with other states, the Commonwealth and industry in the national management group overseeing the eradication. The survey of all national wheat breeding centres for wheat streak mosaic virus is being completed as soon as possible to determine the extent of the virus.

Under the national agreement, we also need to undertake surveys across Queensland's grains production industry. The DPI will work with industry to minimise the impact on it during this surveillance program. I would like to thank the industry for its support. We need to establish the extent of the virus and its carrier, the leaf curl mite. If there is a positive to this outbreak it is in the timing. There is little crop in the ground at this time of the year, so this surveillance program should be completed quite quickly. This will also mean that there should be very little impact on producers and other businesses. On-property surveillance across the Queensland grain belt will commence today following contact with producers and other sections of the grains industry.