

# Little Cherry Virus 2 (LChV-2)

Little Cherry Virus 2 (LChV-2) is potentially a serious threat to the Tasmanian cherry industry. It is a notifiable plant pest, which means that anyone who sees what they think might be LChV-2 must report it.

## What LChV-2 looks like

The signs are visible as the fruit matures. Those signs are cherries that are smaller than usual, pointed in shape, with a lack of taste and, usually but not always, poor skin colour.

The signs may not be uniform across all fruit on a particular tree and may only be seen on some of the fruit.



*The cherries on the left are from a healthy tree. Those on the right are from a tree infected with Little Cherry Virus 2. Note that, in this case, the skin colour and shape are not significantly different. So, the key symptoms in this case were the size and taste. These cherries were taken from the infected property near Hobart.*

*In this case, from the northern hemisphere, the cherries from an infected tree, exhibit all four key signs – much smaller in size, misshapen, poor taste and poor (ie unripe) colour.*

*Photo courtesy of L. Kunze, Biologische Bundesanstalt für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Bugwood.*



Because of the above, the period of a few weeks before harvest and during picking are the times when, in practice, any case of LChV-2 is likely to be seen.

With some cherry varieties, there can be subtle signs during the rest of the year but, realistically, these signs are generally so subtle that they won't be recognized.

## How LChV-2 spreads

The virus is carried in the phloem. In practice, this means it is the various parts of the tree (branches, leaves, roots, stems etc) that carry the virus. Cherry fruit is not considered a pathway for the virus.

Where it occurs overseas, LChV-2 can be spread by the insect apple mealybug. This insect has never been reported in either Tasmania or any other Australian state or territory. So, spread from tree to tree by an insect vector is unlikely.

By far the more likely way this virus spreads, in the absence of an insect vector, is via infected rootstock or grafts. Because the infection is unlikely to be seen until the tree fruits – generally around 4 to 6 years – it is possible for an infected material to be planted or grafted without the person knowing it for several years.

LChV-2 is not spread by humans via clothing, boots etc.

## The effect of LChV-2

There are no human health risks associated with eating or handling cherries from an infected tree. In any event, cherries from an infected tree are so small that they would be unlikely to be picked and, even if they were, would be graded out of any fruit consignment destined for sale.

The major effect of LChV-2 is the loss of cherry production, which can be significant.

## Control of LChV-2

There is no cure for this virus. Control can only be achieved by removing any infected trees. The preferred action is to fell the tree and treat the stump with a herbicide – as this will also kill any adjacent trees that might have root grafted to it and, as a result, might also be virus infected.

In practice, growers are likely to remove a poor producing tree anyway.

## Distribution of LChV-2

The virus is endemic in Japan, North America and parts of Europe.

Prior to the current (Jan 2014) suspect case here in Tasmania, LChV-2 has never been previously detected in Australia.

If you see what you think might be signs of Little Cherry Virus 2, please report it to DPIPW on 0417 884 460. Please don't take a sample until you have spoken to us. If you can take a photo, that may help.

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