

Rusty Raspberries

Dr Shannon Mulholland, Program Lead Plant Preparedness, NSW DPIRD

We all love that blush red of ripe raspberries but what happens when they turn rusty? Fungal rust that is. Australia has endemic rust pathogens that cause growers headaches from time to time, but a new species has recently been confirmed in raspberries on the NSW north coast. It can affect red raspberries but not black raspberries or blackberries. Raspberry late leaf rust *Aculeastrum americanum* is a fungal pathogen that forms powdery yellow spores over the leaves and sometimes even fruit.



Damage caused on raspberry fruit by Raspberry late leaf rust Photo credit: NSW DPIRD

In the field it looks very similar to yellow rust *Phragmidium rubi-ideai*, a rust pathogen that has been in Australia for some time now.



Plant showing yellow rust *Phragmidium rubi-ideai* on leaves Photo credit: NSW DPIRD

It's hard to tell the two rust species apart when seen in a crop so it is possible raspberry late leaf rust has been with us for longer than we realised. Whilst the impacts reported to date have been low, higher moisture and humidity levels set the perfect conditions for rust to flourish.

Raspberry late leaf rust can be spread within and between farms by wind and rain splash. It can also move via infected canes used for planting so good crop hygiene and the use of clean planting material are important to reduce spread.

It can infect all parts of the plant including leaves, canes, petioles, calyces and fruit. If not effectively managed it can impact yield resulting in premature fruit drop and defoliation. If present on the fruit it may also deem fruit unmarketable

The good news is that existing fungicides registered for yellow rust are also effective against raspberry late leaf rust.



Other management options include:

- Choose sites with good air circulation and full sun exposure so leaves dry quickly
- Avoid dense plantings or overgrown patches where humidity stays high as rust spores prefer these micro-climates
- Remove old floricanes and any visibly infected canes as soon as you spot symptoms as these can harbor overwintering or carry-over inoculum
- Dispose of or bury infected plant material and debris away from the production area so spores don't build up in the patch
- Use drip or ground-based irrigation rather than overhead sprinklers, which keep foliage wet and favour fungal infection
- If overhead watering must be used, schedule it early in the day so plants have time to dry before evening dew or humidity builds
- Train your staff to be on the lookout for this disease
- Crop scouts should look for small yellow/orange spots on the upper surface of older/lower leaves, with powdery or rust-coloured pustules underneath

Raspberry late leaf rust is not a regulated pest in NSW and is not notifiable.