

FRESH NOTES

A TECHNICAL UPDATE PUBLISHED BY HORTGRO SCIENCE

Apple rootstocks exhibiting abnormal gall-like growths

SAPO as the licence holder of the Geneva® rootstocks circulated a letter dated 6 May 2022 and sent to all pome fruit producers by Hortgro on 9 May 2022 titled: 'ROOTSTOCKS EXHIBITING ABNORMAL GROWTHS'. As indicated in the letter, a working group was set up and met on 13 May 2022 to understand the implications of the growths, their potential impacts and to plot the best way forward.

The initial investigations were carried out on G778 Geneva® rootstock. Subsequently, the gall-like growths have also been found on certain M9 rootstocks. It was therefore agreed by the working group that the study should be broadened and escalated to an industry level and led by Hortgro.

Multiple samples sent to two diagnostic laboratories have shown that the various isolates from the gall-like tissue tested negative for the presence of the pathogenic (disease causing) *Rhizobium radiobacter* (Crown Gall) and/or *Rhizobium rhizogenes*. Further tests are currently being conducted and material has also been sent to a third laboratory to get clarity on the diagnostics.

A survey was initiated on Monday 16th May '22 by PlantSA's inspection services of all registered apple nurseries to establish the extent of the problem. A project under Hortgro Science is currently being started to conduct an in-depth study into the potential cause of the gall-like growths to find a solution to the problem. Dr Yolanda Petersen, a bacteriologist from the ARC, and Prof Karen Theron, a nursery tree expert, will conduct the study and will draw on local and international experts where required.

Hortgro will communicate once we have more substantive feedback. We would recommend that you consult with your nursery and/or technical advisor.

Hugh Campbell
Hortgro Plant Material Manager
hugh@hortgro.co.za