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NSW DEPARTMENT OF
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Leaf curl of peach and nectarine

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Orange



LEAF CURL

Cause

Leaf curl is caused by the fungus *Taphrina deformans*.

Symptoms

Symptoms of leaf curl appear early in the season, approximately one month after flowering starts. On young leaves, infected portions may be pink to red. These areas become thickened, and do not expand at the same rate as healthy leaf tissue. This leads to the characteristic curled appearance of this disease.

Whole shoots can be infected, becoming swollen and stunted, pale green to yellow and may exude gum. When this damage affects leaders, lateral branching may occur, leading to 'witches broom'. Young trees are particularly susceptible to shoot infection.

Infected fruit has raised, irregularly shaped and roughened areas which may redden long before healthy fruits show any colour change.

Disease cycle

Spores of the fungus are splashed onto the emerging leaves.

The disease is most severe if cool, moist weather occurs during blossom to shuck fall. If a severe infection occurs and the disease is not controlled, further disease cycles can occur later in the spring.

Control

On bearing trees orchardists should determine if control schedules for brown rot and bacterial diseases are sufficient to control leaf curl. Specific treatment of this disease may not be necessary.

Control of the disease is particularly important on young trees as an infection can severely distort growth.

Where necessary only one application of a fungicidal spray is sufficient to control leaf curl. This application must be thorough and correctly timed at 'early bud swell stage'. The ends of limbs and twigs must be well sprayed. Spray before the buds burst or little control will be achieved and the young growth may be injured by the spray.

A complete program for the control of leaf curl and other diseases and insect pests of stone fruit is given in the *Orchard Plant Protection Guide*, which commercial growers can obtain from their local district horticulturist.

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The first edition of this Agfact was written by LJ Penrose, former Senior Plant Pathologist, NSW Agriculture.