

# Zebra Chip Looking out for Psyllids

## This is your levy at work

The tomato-potato psyllid (TPP) is a small flying insect pest causing major losses in North America and New Zealand, but currently absent from Australia. Given experiences from where it is present, if the psyllid establishes itself here, it will cost the Australian potato industry many millions of dollars.

TPP causes significant damage to plants and related crops (such as tomato) on its own, but it can also carry a bacterium (*Liberibacter*) which infects potato. Together they cause major yield loss with affected plants showing severe stunting, leaf chlorosis, scorching cupping and purpling, swollen nodes, and vascular tissue browning. Plants may also be killed outright.

Infected potato tubers display dark streaks, stripes, flecks or spots in their flesh when cooked, a disorder called "Zebra Chip". The disease undermines the visual appeal and quality of potatoes, rendering them unmarketable.

The psyllid could possibly enter Australia through easterly winds from New Zealand, or through transit on plant materials arriving from the US or New Zealand.



The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) is monitoring the distribution and prevalence of native psyllid populations in fresh and processed potato crops in key growing areas across Eastern Australia using sticky traps. This will provide an early warning system for TPP incursions. The project is also examining the role of psyllids as vectors of disease (Project No. PT10001).



Psyllid



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### Take home message

Industry must be vigilant in order to swiftly identify a potential TPP outbreak.

The financial costs of controlling and managing the psyllid and its bacterial disease will grossly outweigh efforts which individuals can make now to become acquainted with the disease and be meticulous in examining their potato crops.

If you encounter TPP or Zebra chip symptoms, immediately report your findings to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881

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## POTATO INDUSTRY EXTENSION PROGRAM