

LEPTOCYBE INVASA IN ZULULAND

During a field trip to the Zululand area of KwaZulu-Natal, team members of the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP) found symptoms of *Leptocybe invasa* (the *Eucalyptus* gall wasp or Blue Gum Chalcid) on young GC trees near Kwambonambi. Researchers at the TPCP later confirmed the identity of *L. invasa* using molecular techniques. This is the first record of *L. invasa* in South African plantations. *Leptocybe invasa* has since been detected in other areas of Zululand, on both GC and GU trees.

We urge all foresters, contractors, farmers and researchers to be on the look-out for symptoms of *L. invasa* on their trees. This insect infects younger leaves, and especially *E. camaldulensis* and its hybrids. More information on the symptoms and damage of *L. invasa*, can be found on the TPCP website (http://www.fabinet.up.ac.za/tpcp/Leptocybe_alert).

The symptoms of *L. invasa* that were observed suggest that the insect has only recently appeared in the area. In order to take action against the wasp it is, therefore, necessary that all companies survey young plantations of especially GC trees. Please inform the research team of the TPCP if you suspect that you have found signs of this insect in your plantations. If it is a recent introduction to the area (or others in the country), it might be possible to slow down its spread and impact by destroying infected plants. The TPCP is, in the mean time, continuing its efforts to establish a biological control system for the wasp and screening *Eucalyptus* species and hybrids, and their clones, for resistance. However, this is a long-term goal and is likely to still take a number of years, making other management options crucial for the interim.

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