ALERT: NEW DISEASE OF BLACK WATTLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

A previously unknown disease of *Acacia mearnsii* (black wattle) has recently been detected in the KZN Midlands. Research by the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP) at FABI has shown that the disease is caused by a rust fungus, the identification of which has yet to be determined. The disease appears to be relatively wide-spread in the Natal Midlands and the ICFR together with the TPCP and forestry industry partners (NCT) are working to test the susceptibility of some of the commercially grown *A. mearnsii* for resistance to this disease. DNA sequencing and other techniques are currently being used to identify the species of rust involved and plans are underway to understand the biology of the pathogen and thus to be able to enhance management options.

Please report occurrences of this disease to Jolanda Roux (jolanda.roux@fabi.up.ac.za; 0829093202) or the diagnostic clinic (Darryl.herron@fabi.up.ac.za). Early detection of the disease in new areas will greatly assist in assessing its status and informing management strategies.

Defoliation of leaves and brown rust spores and pustules covering the pinnules and rachi

Early infection: Yellow spots with developing brown/black rust pustules in their centres

Brown rust spores and pustules covering an infected rachis and leading to malformation

Brown rust pustules on a young branch

Brown rust spores and pustules covering infected branches and leading to malformation

Malformation of an infected rachis