

AVOCADO SCAB IS NOT PRESENT IN NEW ZEALAND

K.Everett¹, R.A. Fullerton¹, M.A. Manning¹, J. Rees-George¹ and W.F.T. Hartill²

¹HortResearch, Private Bag 92169, Mt Albert, Auckland New Zealand.

²8 Wood Bay Road, Titirangi, Auckland, New Zealand

Email: Keverett@hortresearch.co.nz

Avocado scab is a superficial cosmetic disease of avocados caused by the fungus *Sphaceloma perseae*. Avocado scab was reported as being present in New Zealand in 1991. That record was not validated by New Zealand Phytosanitary Authorities and was therefore not on the avocado pest list. Biosecurity Australia became aware of the record in November 2006 at which time it became a market access issue for New Zealand avocados exported to Australia. Australia does not have this disease. As a consequence the record was re-examined. Using cultural characteristics, spore morphology and DNA sequencing it was shown that the culture upon which the record was based was not *S. perseae*, but was *Phaeosphaeria* sp. (anamorph *Phaeoseptoria* sp.) a fungus common on grasses. This fungus has not been reported to cause disease of avocados, and no symptoms developed following inoculation of young fruitlets. A comparison of herbarium samples of dried skin from the New Zealand specimen upon which the record was based with authenticated herbarium specimens from Florida showed a clear difference in symptomatology. Symptoms in a photograph published with the New Zealand record were similar to those of wind rub reported in Australia. On the basis of these results, the record of avocado scab was shown to be erroneous and the disease is not present in New Zealand.