# Short Note 1.5

# The Okeechobee Saga

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Citrus canker was discovered in Okeechobee County on October 22, 2002. Whenever there was a new discovery within a county, the Department's map would color in the entire county in red, as if the entire county had been infected by canker. Okeechobee's single discovery meant that 896 square miles now became solid red. These maps would be posted on the internet and a press release was issued by the Commissioner. The press release and other supporting documents are provided at the end of this note.

The Indian River grapefruit groves are located to the east of Okeechobee County, and the Highland County citrus groves to the west. So, being able to color 896 square miles as red- or canker infected helped the politics of the program. It also helped the program because the Department determined that this was Miami strain canker from DNA testing. The Department was insisting at the time that Miami canker was rapidly moving northward.

**Figure 1: Okeechobee County**


Okeechobee County is sparsely populated with a population of 39,330 residents. In this county, residential inspections were going to be difficult, due to driving distances. However, access to properties might be easier with fewer fences in rural communities.

Generally, getting a full report from FDACS on a new discovery is not easy. However in this case, the Commissioner's press release included the street address of the new discovery. The first visit to the residence may have taken place on July 30, 2002, but there were no records of this visit on the PIC printout. Then, it appears the daughter of the resident called on August 8, 2002.

The form states the positive tree was an 8 year old Key lime tree. Eight year old tree would mean that it was planted in 1994. This seem to fit my theory that many of the incidences of canker in remote areas were from contaminated nursery stock, bought after Hurricane Andrew hit in 1992. The young trees generate more new flushes, and are generally considered more susceptible to citrus canker.

As stated on the PICS printout, inspectors discovered one infected tree and no exposed trees. Then on October 24, 2002, one infected tree and 10 exposed trees were destroyed with the owner's permission. How did the number of healthy trees suddenly jump from zero to 10 trees? The map states there was a chain link fence around both trees. Still more confusion! The press report of October 29, 2002 also states that 10 exposed trees were destroyed.

## Testing

Examination by microscopy was performed by Dr. Schubert and determined to be citrus canker on October 23, 2002. Obviously, this determination was given high priority. An examination by microscopy can not tell the difference between the Asian and the Wellington strain. The DNA testing was still ongoing at the time of the Commissioner's press release, and not complete until November 8, 2002, about 10 days after the Commissioner's press release. However, the pathogenicity test, regarded as the "gold standard" for citrus canker, was still in progress. All testing was completed 38 days after the citrus trees were removed.

Wellington strain only infects Key lime trees, so a finding of Wellington strain would mean it would be unnecessary to cut down the other healthy trees unless they were Key lime trees. However, the regulations of the Department were to cut down all citrus within 1900-ft, regardless of the test results.

Dr. Dixon wrote to me saying the pathogenicity test, begun on October 23, 2002, concluded on December 3, 2002. with a positive indication of Asian citrus canker. The pathogenicity test should take one to two weeks to complete, not five weeks. My suspicions are that the pathogenicity test failed to confirm the discovery. It is possible the pathogenicity test was done a second time.

Everything suggests the Department was in a hurry to color another county red, and to let Central Florida grove owners that citrus canker was spreading fast. This helps in both the legislative branch, which approved new laws on inspections and funding, and the judicial branch, which was considering the injunction issued by Judge Fleet.

## The Plot Thickens

The CCEP Comprehensive Report in 2004 shows one positive tree and 50 exposed trees in residential lots in Okeechobee County. However, in the 2012 Report, the number of positive trees drops to zero, and the number of exposed trees is 39, which is a decrease of 11 trees. All very strange, and there is no notations of what was how it was possible to have exposed trees without a positive one.

**Okeechobee County- Residential Tree Destroyed**

2004 Comprehensive Report: Infected trees 1 Exposed trees 50

2012 Comprehensive Report: Infected trees 0 Exposed trees 39

The 2006 Comprehensive Report is the same as the 2012: Zero infected trees and 39 exposed trees in Okeechobee County. So, it is not likely this is a typo.

The best explanation is that the pathogenicity test did not show ACC and that there were not 10 exposed trees on the property. I tried to get information on other discoveries, which were reported in press releases by the Commissioner. However, without an exact address, the Department became uncooperative.

## Concluding Remarks

It may seem inconsequential to be discussing 10 trees which may or may not have existed, a Key lime tree which might have not been infected and odd discrepancies in the Comprehensive Report. However, the Department added importance to this discovery through their press release and map of new discoveries.

The Okeechobee saga was a clear case of cut then test. The cutting of the positive tree was done with the owner's permission. As a matter of law, the Department does not need the owner's permission, but would need to provide the owner an Immediate Final Order, declaring his tree was infected. In this case, the positive tree would not be cut down for 10 more days, allowing the initial testing to be completed. The pathogenicity test results were available about 5 weeks after the Commissioner announced that laboratory tests confirmed citrus canker in Okeechobee. The owner's permission relieves the Department of any liability of a false identification.

Why would the Commissioner want to put out a press release, and inform the newspapers of this new find while testing was ongoing? I suspect the Department in October 2002, needed to shore up support for CCEP. Judge J. Leonard Fleet had ruled that search warrants were required in May 2002, and the case was under appeal in the Fourth District Court of Appeals. The "new discoveries" were a way to keep the story in the papers.

Figure 2: 2012 Comprehensive Report with zero infected trees

| County | History | | Quarantine History |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ▪ **November 2000**<br>Beginning of several legal challenges, which restricted the CCEP from cutting exposed trees in South Florida.<br>▪ **January 2003**<br>Court rulings upheld the legislature's mandate for 1900-ft. exposed tree removal.<br>▪ **May 2003**<br>The southern portion of the South Florida quarantine zone was expanded by 64 sq. miles to cover recent positive grove finds in western Miami-Dade County.<br>▪ **Ongoing Activities**<br>The largest concentration of citrus canker infection is present in southeast Florida. Survey activities and control of infected trees is ongoing in Miami-Dade.<br>▪ **10 January 2006** – all CCEP activity ends.<br>▪ Commercial survey continues for fresh fruit certification. | | Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Monroe |
| **MONROE** | **Residential control action:**<br>Positive: 360<br>Exposed: 159<br>Total: 519 | **No commercial activity.** | **Quarantine Removed:** |
| | ▪ **June 2002**<br>*Big Pine Key:* Four positive trees on two properties were discovered across two sq. miles. The three trees were removed with the property owner's consent.<br>▪ **November 2003**<br>One positive tree was found. All positive trees have been destroyed.<br>▪ **January 2004**<br>*Marathon Key:* Three positive trees on three properties were discovered in two separate locations.<br>▪ **May 2004**<br>Keys quarantine established, 119 square miles.<br>▪ **10 January 2006** – all CCEP activity ends. | | **Keys:** removed 1 August 2006, 119 sq. miles, part of the 1,495.57 sq. mi. quarantine area in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Monroe |
| **OKEECHOBEE** | **Residential control action:**<br>Positive: 0<br>Exposed: 39<br>Total: 39 | **Commercial control action:**<br>**Trees:** 215,317<br>**Acres:** 1,304.9 | **Quarantine Removed:** |
| | ▪ **22 October 2002**<br>Citrus canker was detected at one residential property by USDA inspectors conducting routine sentinel tree survey. With the homeowner's permission, the positive tree was removed, along with 10 other exposed citrus trees in close proximity.<br>▪ **2 July 2005**<br>Four new commercial finds involving approximately 350 acres. | | **Pulitzer:**<br>removed 1 August 2006, 10.21 sq. miles<br>**Bass/Anchor:**<br>removed 1 |

Figure 3: 2002 Press Release





Fresh Florida.

**DOACS Press Releases**

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800
(850) 488 - 3022

**Department Press Release**
**10-29-2002**

Denise Feiber
(352) 372-3505 x102

**New Citrus Canker Detection Found In Okeechobee County**

TALLAHASSEE -- The Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services has verified the presence of citrus canker on a residential citrus tree located at 101 NW 106 Street, Okeechobee, Florida, and is taking steps to prevent the spread of the disease.

Citrus canker is a bacterial disease which affects only citrus. It causes lesions on fruit, stems and leaves, causes premature fruit and leaf drop and weakens trees, making them susceptible to other diseases. The department and the United States Department of Agriculture are involved in an aggressive eradication program in 13 other Florida counties in which canker has been detected.

Inspectors discovered suspicious lesions on a key lime tree earlier this week during a routine Sentinel survey inspection. Sentinel survey is the program that monitors highly susceptible fruit trees in high-risk areas for early signs of citrus canker. Plant pathologists took samples from the suspect tree, and lab tests have confirmed that the bacteria is citrus canker, Asian strain. With the homeowners' permission, the positive tree has been removed, along with ten other exposed citrus trees in close proximity.

State and federal officials are conducting an investigation to determine how the disease may have gotten into the county. They will also continue carrying out survey activities, which are conducted only with homeowners' consent, in the surrounding area to delimit the scope of the infection. Homeowners are encouraged to allow inspectors entry to survey any citrus on their property.

Residents should make sure that they are dealing with state or federal inspectors, who can be identified with photo identification cards, before they permit access to their property for inspection purposes or permit trees to be removed. For further information, residents can call the program's toll-free helpline at (800) 282-5153 or check the department's website at http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/canker/.

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**Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services**
Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner

Please Respond to:
Division of Plant Industry
PO Box 147100
Gainesville, FL 32614-7100
Phone: 352/372-3505 ext.118, 140
Fax: 352/334-0737
Email: dixonw@doacs.state.fl.us

6 May 2003

Mr. David Lord
6451 SW 73rd St
South Miami, FL 33143

Dear Mr. Lord:

Per your email request of 5 May 2003 regarding receiving a copy of the diagnostic report that reported the Okeechobee find as the Miami genotype, please find enclosed a copy of that report per my communication with Mr. Richard Gaskalla, division director. The pathogenicity of this sample was reported "in progress"; however, as of 3 December 2002 that too was completed and positive for Asian strain citrus canker. The cost of reproduction of this report is not being charged.

Sincerely yours,

**COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE**
**CHARLES H. BRONSON**

Wayne N. Dixon, Ph.D.
Chief
Bureau of Entomology, Nematology, and Plant Pathology

xc: R. Gaskalla

**TRS:** 36 - 35 - 15

**Site #:**

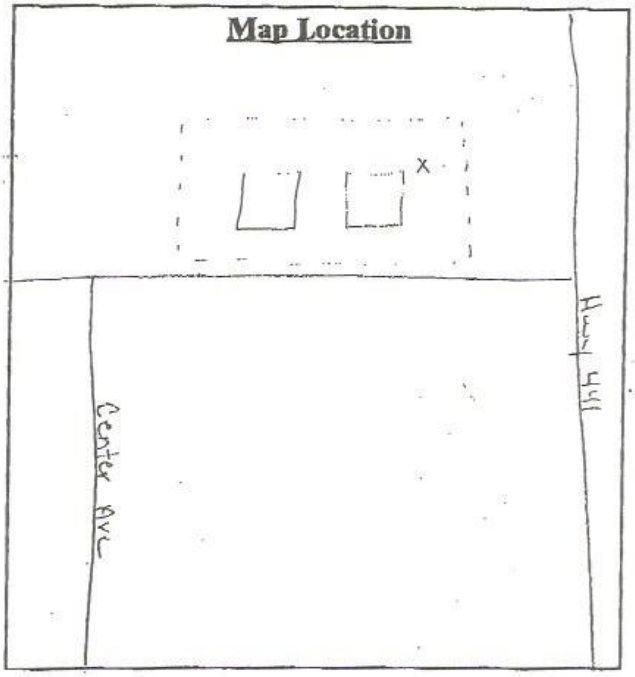
**Address:** 101 N.E. 10th St

**CITY:** Okee

115 36 35 0010 00020 0016A

**Directions to address:**

**Map Location**




**Homeowner contacted:** NY

Daughter called 8/8/02

**Sentinel tree variety and location:** BVR

**Highly susceptible:** GF=grapefruit L=key lime TO=trifoliate orange
**Moderately susceptible:** SW=sweet orange SO=sour orange LE=lemon TG=tangelo
**Highly resistant:** CI=citron CA=calamondin KU=kumquat **Moderately resistant:** TA=tangerine PU= pummelo LI=Persian lime

**Remarks:** Thank God Ranch on gate
2 homes w/ left chainlink fence around bdg trees are on property of Orange N. White house

| Date | Time | Initials | Completed | Skipped | Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7-30-02 | 10:30 | LF, JC | | | |
| 10-22-02 | 11:10 | LF | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

# SERVICING
# DAILY SUMMARY
# OKEECHOBEE

**DATE:** 7-30-02

**TEAM#** Rt. 2

**T** 36 **R** 35 **S** 15

**SECTION COMPLETE YES** ✓ **NO** ___

**PROPERTIES SERVICED** 7

**PROPERTIES DELETED** ___

**PROPERTIES ADDED** 45 (7/31/02) 6 (7/31/02) 7 (8/1/02)

**PROPERTIES SKIPPED** ___

**SUSPECT PROPERTIES** 3240

**CREWS INITIAL/ #** LF : LC / ___

11534 35 0010 00020 0061

# Sentinel Tree Survey Program

## SPECIMEN REPORT FORM

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services / Division of Plant Industry

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Apiary Botony Entomology Nematology *Pathology* | Priority: | Purpose: | Disposition: |
| Log Number: | *(1) Urgent* | *(1) Quarantine* | (1) Pin |
| Date Received: | (2) Routine | (2) Certification | (2) Preserve |
| | (3) Control | (3) Plant Problem | (3) Slide |
| | | (4) Survey | (4) Envelope |
| | | (5) Academic | (5) Discard |
| Host Scientific Name: Citrus Spec. (Key lime) | | | |
| Host Common Name: **Citrus** | | | Returned: |

Diagnosis or Determination:

| | |
|---|---|
| Date Collected: 10-22-02 | Collector: Leslie Forrester |
| Date Sent: 10-22-02 | Sender: Leslie Forrester |
| Owner or Nursery: | |
| Address or Location: City, State, Zip 101 N.W 106th St. Okee. Fl. | |
| County: 47 | Survey Code / Coordinates: 36-35-15 |
| Total Number of Plants Involved: 1 | Total Acres Involved: |
| Total Number of Plants Affected: | Total Acres Affected: |

| Infection or Infestation Intensity: | Part Involved or Source: | Stage or Organism: | Collecting Technique: |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Slight | (1) Roots | (1) Egg | (1) Black Light |
| (2) Moderate (very sm. tree) | (2) Stems | (2) Larva | (2) Jackson |
| (3) Severe | (3) Bark | (3) Pupa | (3) McPhail |
| | (4) Leaves | (4) Adult | (4) Steiner |
| | (5) Flower | (5) Nymph | (5) Sticky Board |
| | (6) Fruit | (6) All Stages | (6) Hand Catch |
| | (7) Mine | | (7) Sweeping |
| | (8) Gall | | (8) Beating |
| | (9) Soil or Other | | (9) Other |

Remarks:

_____ # Positive

_____ # Exposed

**Please send a copy of the determination to:**
Tim Riley
USDA APHIS PPQ CCEP
4248 Bandy Blvd
Ft. Pierce, FL 34981

Apiary Yard Name

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Confirmed A.F.B | Confirmed E.C.B | Unknown |

| Culture | Microscopy | Host Indicators | Serology | *Symptoms* | Green House Observation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Determiner: | Recipient of Report: | Date Completed: |
| | | |

# CITRUS CANKER SPECIMEN SUBMISSION FORM

THE ADVANCED DIAGNOSTICS LABORATORY
THE BUREAU OF PLANT PATHOLOGY

**To Be Completed by Plant Pathology**: Log Number: XL02-0026 Urgent __ Routine X

Submitted by: _____ 10·29·02
Signature & Date

Collection Data: County: OKEECHOBEE
Locality: 101 NE 106TH ST.
OK, FL 34972
Host: KEY LIME
Collector/Date: FORRESTER 10·22·02

Comments: _____

Results (Determined By & Date):

Visual ID T. SCHUBERT 10.23
Bacterial Streaming T. SCHUBERT 10·23
Pathogenicity IN PROGRESS
ELISA
Plasmid
FAME
Other

Comments: _____

**To Be Completed by ADL:**

Received by: _____ 10/30/2002
Signature & Date

Results: Strain (A, B, ...) A Method(s) PG-4
FL Genotype _____ Method(s) 06-4, Box

Comments: _____

Determined by: _____ 11/8/02
Signature & Date

...Agriculture and Consumer Services / Division of Plant Industry

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Apiary Botany: Entomology Nematology (Pathology) | Priority: (1) Urgent (2) Routine (3) Control | Purpose: (1) Quarantine (2) Certification (3) Plant Problem (4) Survey (5) Academic | Disposition (1) Pin (2) Preserve (3) Slide (4) Envelope (5) Discard |
| Log Number: XC2002-0026 | | | |
| Date Received: 10/23/02 | | | |
| Host Scientific Name: Citrus Spec. (Keylime) aurantiifolia | | | |
| Host Common Name: Citrus Key lime | | | Returned: |

Diagnosis or Determination: Xanthomonas axonopodis pv. citri

| | |
|---|---|
| Date Collected: 10-22-02 | Collector: Leslie Forrester |
| Date Sent: 10-22-02 | Sender: Leslie Forrester |
| Owner or Nursery: | |
| Address or Location: City, State, Zip 101 N.W 106th St. Okee. Fl. | |
| County: 47 | Survey Code / Coordinates: 36-35-15 |
| Total Number of Plants Involved: 1 | Total Acres Involved: |
| Total Number of Plants Affected: | Total Acres Affected: |

| Infection or Infestation Intensity: | Part Involved or Source: | Stage or Organism: | Collecting Technique: |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Slight | (1) Roots | (1) Egg | (1) Black Light |
| (2) Moderate (very severe) | (2) Stems | (2) Larva | (2) Jackson |
| (3) Severe | (3) Bark | (3) Pupa | (3) McPhail |
| | (4) Leaves | (4) Adult | (4) Steiner |
| | (5) Flower | (5) Nymph | (5) Sticky Board |
| | (6) Fruit | (6) All Stages | (6) Hand Catch |
| | (7) Mine | | (7) Sweeping |
| | (8) Gall | | (8) Beating |
| | (9) Soil or Other | | (9) Other |

Remarks: _____ # Positive _____ # Exposed

Please send a copy of the determination to:
Tim Riley
USDA APHIS PPQ CCEP
4248 Bandy Blvd
Ft. Pierce, FL 34981

Bacterial streaming positive. TS

Apiary Yard Name

| Confirmed A.P.I: | Confirmed E.C.B | Unknown |
|---|---|---|

| Culture | Microscopy | Host Indicators | Serology | Symptoms | Green House Observation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ✓ | | | — | |

| Determiner: | Recipient of Report: | Date Completed: |
|---|---|---|
| Schubert | Bowman | 10/23/02 |

## Property Information Form

**Parcel Number:** 11536350010000020006A
**Property Address:** 101 NE 106TH ST
OKEECHOBEE, 34972
**Property County:** (47) OKEECHOBEE

**Homeowner Name:** [ bb ]
**Property TRS:** 36S35E15 **Proper**
**Property Status:** CONTROLLED
**Property Danger Indicator:**

| Action Type | Begin Date | End Date | Positive Destroyed | Exposed Destroyed | DPI Destroyed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONTROL | 10/24/2002 | 10/24/2002 | 1 | 10 | 0 |

| Action Type | Begin Date | End Date | Total Positive | Total Exposed | Total Negative | Total Trees |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PATHOLOGY | 10/22/2002 | 10/22/2002 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

### Exposing Property Infomation

| TRS | Exposing Property/ Multiblock | Address |
|---|---|---|
| 36S35E15 | 11536350010000020006A | 101 NE 106TH ST |

PICS
PRINTOUT

'rinted on: November 06, 2002