



Brokaw Nursery LLC

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March 25, 2009

Dear Customers and Friends,

If you have avocado trees on order for Summer 2009 or later (these trees are being produced at our new nursery site) you are receiving this notification for the first time. If you have an avocado tree order for Spring 2009, for trees from our present nursery site, you have been waiting for our final test results.

To bring everyone current, in February we had a positive test for *Phytophthora cinnamomi* within the nursery growing grounds at the present site in Saticoy. We took immediate measures to conduct additional testing, isolate affected areas and prevent additional spread. Three series of sampling representing every row of avocado trees in the nursery and nearly 1,400 separate samples have provided a picture of the extent of the problem.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the tests showed no *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Those areas that tested positive for the disease were concentrated in specific sections that have been isolated to prevent spread. Trees in these sections, which represent a minor percentage of our avocado tree crop, are being destroyed. The entire nursery has been treated to halt the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* to areas where the fungus was not detected. Of course we are continuously monitoring the entire nursery.

We have disclosed the situation to all customers holding orders for the entire 2009 avocado tree crop from the present Saticoy location, regardless of whether their trees come from areas that tested positive. We must be clear in characterizing all avocado trees in the nursery as having been exposed to root rot even though the extensive testing failed to detect the fungus in the areas that will remain after we eliminate trees from the affected areas. Just as scientists are unable to prove a negative, we cannot prove the absence of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in any individual tree that may be delivered. This has always been the case despite protective measures taken, but it's a more poignant issue given today's circumstances.

As we discuss the avocado root rot situation with customers, we have encountered responses ranging from "I've always assumed that root rot is everywhere, including nursery trees, so it makes no difference" to "I have infested ground but I think I'll wait for Summer trees from the new nursery site." Most customers' feelings fall somewhere in the middle.

As our customers grapple with their options, which include cancellation, delay of delivery or taking delivery, many are contemplating the significance of root rot in today's avocado industry. Here is a summary of some of the thoughts and questions that we have encountered:

Phytophthora cinnamomi was discovered in California avocados almost 70 years ago. Since then, the disease has been the focus of intense research. During the 1960's and 70's it was the single greatest threat to the industry's survival.

Today, avocado root rot is present in most California avocado orchards. We have an array of tools and techniques that enable most avocado orchards in California to thrive despite the presence of the root rot fungus. Some of these are:

- Selection and improvement of planting sites
- Water management
- Resistant rootstocks
- Chemical controls
- Ridging/Gypsum
- Better understanding of avocado orchard management

The current challenge is to gain a valid perspective on Phytophthora cinnamomi and its importance in today's industry. Do today's management tools diminish its significance? Is its distribution such that we have it in our orchards whether we know it or not? Is it still the major challenge that it was 40 years ago?

We encourage every grower to consider these questions. Independent experts and Farm Advisors can be consulted and will provide valuable perspective. Our purpose is not to present an argument to justify the shipment of suspect trees; these will be eliminated if we encounter them. However, as growers holding orders for Spring 2009 consider all possible ramifications of their decisions, these questions and issues inevitably arise.

Avocado deliveries have begun for Spring trees. A few orders have been canceled and some have moved to Summer 2009 or Spring 2010. This has created an opportunity for those who want to plant this Spring. Trees are available and are ready for delivery at any time. Contact Larry or Shelley for details. Every avocado tree selected for delivery will continue to meet our traditional visual standards for appearance, size, and vigor.

If you hold an order for Spring 2009 have not spoken to us about the determination of your order, please do so right away. Tree availability for next year is dwindling.

Sincerely,



Rob Brokaw
Brokaw Nursery LLC