

DISEASE NOTE

**FIRST RECORD OF *VERTICILLIUM*
DAHLIAE ON OLIVE IN MALTA**

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Wilting of three-year old olive trees (*Olea europaea* L.) was observed in a grove in Ghaxaq (Malta), in April 2004. *Verticillium dahliae* Kleb. (Hawksworth and Talboys, 1970) was isolated on tap-water agar (TWA) from wood explants of wilted twigs. All the isolates abundantly produced microsclerotia on TWA and on potato dextrose agar (PDA). On May 2004, colonies of *V. dahliae* grown on PDA were suspended by a blender in sterile tap water to a concentration of $5 \cdot 10^5$ CFU ml⁻¹ on PDA. Five one-year-old olive seedlings were inoculated by root immersion in the inoculum suspension and transplanted in 16 cm diameter plastic pots containing a mixture (1:1:1 w/w/w) of soil, sand and peat. Five controls seedlings were treated in the same way with sterile tap water. All the plants were kept under climatised glasshouse conditions (20±4°C) and watered to field capacity when needed. Epinasty and moderate defoliation were first observed on the inoculated plants one month after inoculation. In the following months smaller twigs started to wilt, then the wilting extended to larger branches. *V. dahliae* was re-isolated in December from all the inoculated plants. No symptoms were observed on control plants and all attempts to isolate the pathogen from them failed. This is the first record of *V. dahliae* on olive in Malta.

Hawksworth D.L., Talboys P.W., 1970. Descriptions of Pathogenic Fungi and Bacteria No. 256. Commonwealth Mycological Institute (C.M.I.), Kew, Surrey, U.K.

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