

# The flood of sudden oak death virus has killed 50 million trees



On October 10, 2017, a lone oak tree stands on a field in Glen Ellen, California. (Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

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[Epoch Times December 07, 2019] (Interview by Epoch Times reporter Chris Karr, compiled by Li Siqi) [Sudden Oak Death](#) (SOD) virus is spreading in northern and central California. Recent surveys show that the number of oak trees suffering from SOD in 2019 has doubled compared with 2018, and the number is still increasing.

Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) said that in the past 20 years, more than 50 million oak trees have died from the [SOD](#)

virus in northern California and southern Oregon . Matteo Garbelotto, the head of the tree pathology and fungi laboratory at the school, told The Epoch Times that the huge rainfall in California two years ago and this year's rainfall help explain the spread of the SOD virus.

He said: "The SOD virus is a bit like malaria," and it is spread through other trees, especially the Bay of California laurels. "Like mosquitoes transmit malaria, laurels transmit SOD virus. The laurels that carry bacteria can infect nearby oak trees, but oak trees themselves will not transmit SOD virus." In addition to laurels, Tanoak evergreen trees can also transmit SOD virus.

At present, there is no effective way to control the SOD virus, but prevention is the first, such as clearing small and medium laurel trees within 10 yards of oak trees. For particularly valuable oak trees, Gabelotto suggested spraying environmentally friendly chemicals to improve the oak's ability to resist SOD virus.

Susan Frankel is a plant pathologist at the Pacific Southwest Research Station of the Ministry of Agriculture. She said that the SOD virus is a non-native pathogen and the current situation is "still deteriorating." She also said that California had noticed the SOD virus in the mid-1990s. The virus spreads widely and is highly destructive. In Oregon, the authorities tried to control this foreign disease, but it didn't work.

Forest health expert Chris Lee said that non-native pathogens are one of the two main reasons for the spread of SOD. The other reason is that the SOD virus can be spread through the air. Lee also serves as the leader of the California Oak Mortality Task Force.

SOD virus can cause three types of identifiable risk levels: tree death; trees may hurt people or houses when they fall, which is the most important risk; and a large number of dead trees are flammable after they dry out,

causing wildfires. The violent fire caused by the time made it impossible for firefighters to approach and was extremely difficult to deal with. ◇

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