Australian Government

Department of Agriculture

Plant health surveillance

Protecting the health of your farm business by monitoring crops

June 2019

One of the most important ways to protect the health of your farm business is to regularly monitor or check your crops.

Finding any new pests or weeds early gives the best chance of preventing spread, and hopefully means a better chance of eradicating or containing a problem that could damage your business.

It's also important to make a record of your crop monitoring, even if nothing is found. This provides 'evidence of absence' to show that your farm (and our nation) is free of plant pests of particular concern. Known as general surveillance data, these records are becoming increasingly important for Australian growers wanting access to local and overseas markets.

Crop monitoring can also be called plant health surveillance or biosecurity surveillance, but regardless of what you call it, it makes good business sense.

Keeping your farm free of pests, weeds and diseases means lower production costs, higher yields, cleaner products, and better access to markets for your produce—both in other parts of Australia and overseas.

What growers can do

- Find out about the pests that threaten the health of your business. These can be exotic (not present in Australia) or established (pests that are already in some parts of the country, such as Queensland fruit fly or grapevine phylloxera).

  Visit the Farm Biosecurity website to know what the threats are for your farm and your industry at farmbiosecurity.com.au or ask your industry association

- Check for pests or signs of disease in your orchards, paddocks, nursery, or any other places where crops are grown or stored, and record the findings. Even if you find nothing it's important to still make a record. Recording zeros over a long period helps to demonstrate freedom from particular pests, which can be important for access to local and overseas markets.

  Download a free template from the Farm Biosecurity website to help you monitor your crops at farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/records/ or ask your industry association

- Find out how to protect your business through the six essentials of farm biosecurity, from industry pages on the Plant Health Australia website as well as Farm Biosecurity. Your industry may also have a free biosecurity manual, that's tailored to the crops you grow.

  Find out about Farm Biosecurity and download a free manual for your industry at farmbiosecurity.com.au

- Each industry has particular pests that could be a problem, and some have dedicated surveillance strategies to help industry and government take action on these threats. Surveillance strategies are in place for the citrus and forest industries, with strategies for grains, potatoes, temperate and tropical fruit industries on the way. Growers can also take part in area wide management to keep pests out of their local area by working with others who live and work there.

  Contact your industry association or local government to find out about programs you can take part in.
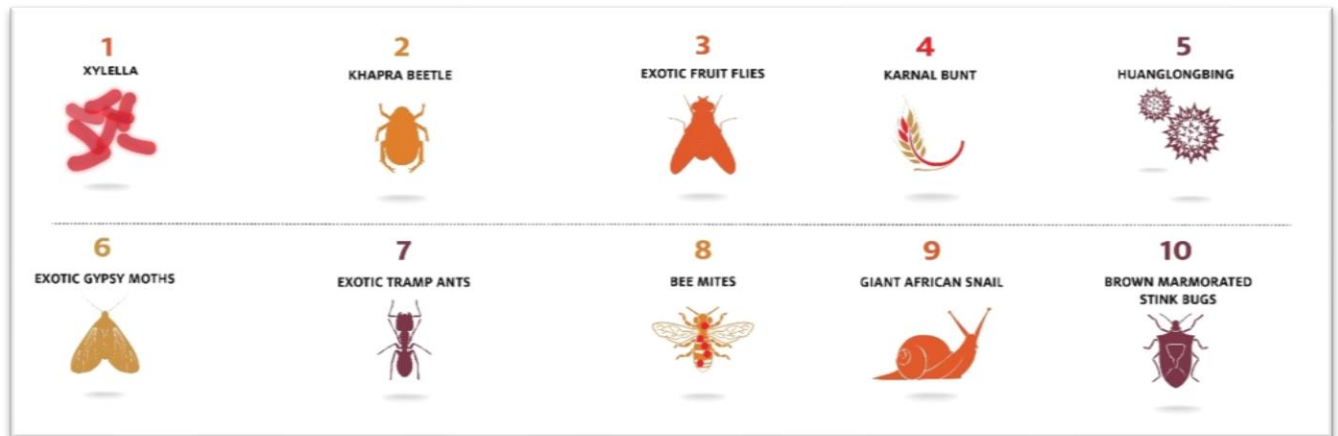
- Report anything unusual. When it comes to pests, diseases and weeds, prevention is always better (and cheaper) than cure.

IF YOU SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL, CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
☎ 1800 084 881

Pests and diseases to watch out for

So that all Australians know what to look for, there's a **list of Australia's Top 40 exotic and unwanted plant pests** available on the department's website. Some are major pests of agriculture, including grains, citrus, grapes, forests and honey bees. Here's the Top 10:

Find out more about the Top 40 exotic and unwanted plant pests at **http://agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/plant**.

These pests are a major target for Australia's plant biosecurity surveillance system, with activities undertaken by industry groups and government agencies. Growers and agronomists can help too—people on the ground are often the first to notice a new plant pest intruder.

Find out what your biggest pest threats are. With around 350 exotic pest threats posing a serious threat to our agricultural industries, each crop has its own Top 10 worst threats, or more. You can find out about pests you need to focus on at the **Farm Biosecurity website**, and also on the industry pages at **Plant Health Australia**.

Whether it's called crop monitoring, checking plants for signs of pests or diseases, or plant health surveillance, everyone can agree that biosecurity is good for business.

Preventing pests from spreading to your farm with on-farm biosecurity

Crop monitoring and recording the results is one biosecurity measure that can pay big rewards, but there are other things that you can do to stop pests, diseases or weeds from getting to or spreading on your farm.

You can protect your farm with simple steps, such as:

- Putting up signs at entrances to ask visitors to contact you before entering production areas
- Providing parking areas near the house or site office
- Organising a location for deliveries and pick-ups away from production and storage areas
- Installing and using vehicle wash-down facilities
- Sticking to existing roads or tracks to move around your property
- Using designated farm vehicles
- Putting posters on shed walls to let everyone know what pests and diseases to look out for.

These actions together provide a layer of biosecurity protection around your farm.

Free biosecurity resources to help you protect your business

The **Farm Biosecurity website** (run by Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia) offers many free resources designed to help you to work out what your biggest biosecurity risks are, and what you can to do tackle them. Also speak to your industry association or check your BMP program.

Go to the Crops section of the **Farm Biosecurity website** to see videos for your industry, download a biosecurity manual, or get top tips. There's also short videos on the **six biosecurity essentials** at **farmbiosecurity.com.au/videos**

Farm biosecurity planning doesn't have to be complicated. It involves thinking about how new diseases, pests and weeds could arrive, and how you can minimise the risks to your business. It's useful to start with a map of your farm to consider risk areas, and how to protect different parts of your property. The practices you implement may vary, depending on factors such as the size and location of your property, the facilities available, and the pest and disease risks that need to be addressed.

Download a Farm Biosecurity Planner from farmbiosecurity.com.au/planner or get the Farm Biosecurity app for your smart phone from **farmbiosecurity.com.au/farmbiosecurity-app**.

Respect interstate quarantine rules

Moving around within Australia can spread pests, diseases and weeds that are already a problem in some areas. There is a set of rules for travellers, restricting the movement of risky things like plants and fruit and vegetables to other parts of the country.

And there is a set of rules for producers, transport companies and other commercial businesses, known as Interstate Certification Agreements, which you must abide by when moving produce interstate.

You can find out about the rules for travellers and businesses on the **Interstate Quarantine website** at **http://interstatequarantine.org.au/**

Take part in area wide management of established pests

As well as taking steps to stop the spread of weeds, pests and diseases onto your property, you can increase protection from those already in your region, by working with others to manage them. As we're all well aware, pests and diseases don't respect boundaries, so it pays to coordinate your efforts with others in the area.

Area wide management might only be an agreement between you and your neighbours to manage pests, or it can be more extensive. Talk to any local grower groups, and your local council about any regional initiatives. Banding together can have benefits for all, helping to clean up problems such as abandoned or neglected farms or pests harboured in the backyards of nearby towns.

Area wide management is an approach that can be applied to many pests but is currently a widespread technique for managing pest species of fruit flies: Queensland fruit fly in the eastern states, and Mediterranean fruit fly in Western Australia.

Biosecurity Matters—on the farm, on holiday, and online

It's not just on the farm, packing shed or nursery where biosecurity matters. Most of us are familiar with quarantine at airports or interstate borders, but there are many other biosecurity measures in place within Australia to help protect us all from unwanted pests and diseases.

Whether you're going on a holiday, shopping on the Internet, or gardening, we can all play our part. The Department of Agriculture's Biosecurity Matters website has lots of information on the key ways we can all keep our country safe every day. **http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-matters**

How to be biosecurity aware

Read about your biosecurity responsibilities by selecting the hobbies and activities you enjoy:

| Gardening | Farming | Domestic travel | International travel |
| Online shopping | Recreational fishing | Bushwalking | Owning pets |

What all of us can do

Report a pest or disease concern in your backyard or on your farm

Seen something unusual? Report it, even if you're not sure. Pests and diseases can spread quickly over large distances. It's essential that you report what you find as soon as possible. This gives us the best chance of containing it before it spreads.

IF YOU SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL, CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881

Ring the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline: 1800 084 881 which will be answered by your local department of agriculture.

Most of the time the pest won't be anything serious, but reports are encouraged. Experts can quickly establish if the pest or sick plant you see is anything out of the ordinary, and it's better to have a false alarm than miss out on picking up a new invader.

Many significant detections in Australia have come from someone noticing something unusual and alerting authorities.

Found something suspicious in goods, containers or parcels?

Keep an eye on all cargo, containers or parcels arriving through airports, seaports and in international mail. If you see something unusual or unexpected, secure it and report it immediately.

You can call the **See. Secure. Report. Hotline** on **1800 798 636** to speak to specially trained officers who investigate all reports related to imported items, or you can complete the online reporting form at **http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/report**.

You **will not be prosecuted** if you or someone you know has accidentally imported risk material.

Tell others to keep an eye out as well—spread the word about watching for exotic pests.

Together we can keep Australia free from damaging plant pests and diseases

Where to find out more

Find out how and why Biosecurity Matters in everyday activities like shopping online and gardening at **http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-matters**

Be inspired by the winners of the Australian Biosecurity Awards **http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/australia/public-awareness/aba**

Download the free Farm Biosecurity Planner from **farmbiosecurity.com.au/planner** or get the smartphone app from **farmbiosecurity.com.au/farmbiosecurity-app.**

For travelling or moving goods within Australia you can find out more about your biosecurity obligations on the Australian Interstate Quarantine website at **https://www.interstatequarantine.org.au/**

Plant biosecurity, the system that protects us and key pest threats: Plant Health Australia's National Plant Biosecurity Status Report is a useful resource which you can find at **planthealthaustralia.com.au/npbsr**

Take action against Australia's Top 40 Exotic and Unwanted Plant Pests: information and videos available on the **Department of Agriculture website**

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Citrus growers can download their industry's national surveillance strategy from **planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/national-citrus-biosecurity-surveillance-strategy**

Foresters can download their industry's national surveillance strategy from **planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/national-forest-biosecurity-surveillance-strategy**.