

Emergency Plant Pest reporting and what happens next

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Plant Biosecurity & Product Integrity Orange

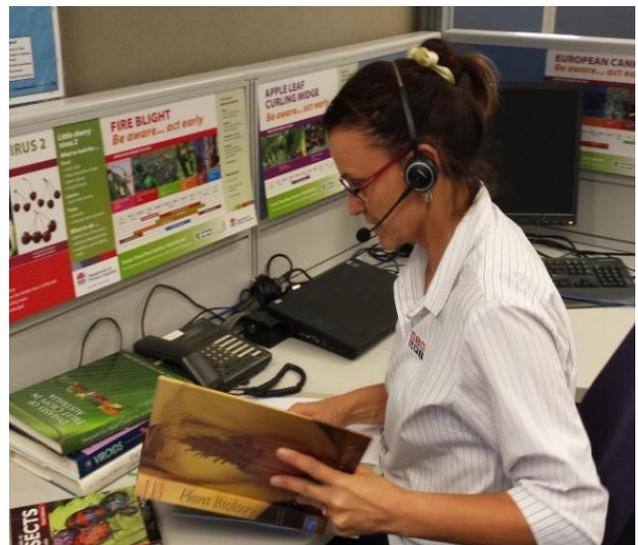
Emergency Plant Pests

A plant pest is a disease causing organism or an invertebrate which threatens agricultural production, forestry or native and amenity plants.

A plant pest is considered an **Emergency Plant Pest** (EPP) when it is either:

- a known pest overseas but not previously occurring in Australia;
- a variant form of a pest already in Australia;
- an entirely new or unknown pest of uncertain origin; or
- a pest occurring in Australia that is being officially controlled to minimise spread and to manage impacts on market access

Emergency plant pests are also referred to as exotic plant pests.



The importance of reporting suspect Emergency Plant Pests

If an EPP was to become established in Australia it could have severe impacts on agricultural production, native flora and trade access. Early detection and reporting is key to successfully eradicating an EPP. The earlier an EPP is discovered and reported, the less chance it has to reproduce and spread.

In 2004 early detection and reporting in Queensland led to the successful eradication of the devastating disease citrus canker which causes blemishing on citrus fruit making it unmarketable. Eradication of the outbreak saved citrus growers from market restrictions and the ongoing costs of trying to manage the disease. Citrus canker is no longer present in Australia.

Checking for Emergency Plant Pests

The simplest way of detecting EPPs is to know what is 'normal' and, by contrast, what is 'suspicious'. Get to know the pest and diseases in your area and note if anything changes unexpectedly. Monitor crops, keep records and educate staff on common pest problems so that if anything new or suspicious shows up it can be brought to attention.

People working in agricultural sectors are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the High Priority Pests relevant to their industries, make them known to staff, and include them in surveillance activities to improve chances of early detection.

Plant Health Australia has compiled lists of High Priority Pests for their member plant industries. These are known pests overseas that are recognised as having high damage potential to particular industries if they were to become established in Australia.

Reporting anything unusual

All suspect exotic pests can be reported through the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline **1800 084 881**.

In NSW, calling the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline will divert you to Biosecurity NSW, a division of the NSW Department of Primary Industries. All calls are taken seriously and treated confidentially.



Photos and information to accompany your hotline report can be emailed to biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

What happens when you call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline?

In NSW, hotline callers will be presented with a number of options and should select the option for reporting an exotic pest of plants. The hotline is monitored during business hours and callers should leave a message with details of:

- Name, contact number and location
- The plant affected and a description of the damage on the plant
- Whether there is a pest present (e.g. insect) that may be causing the damage
- Description of pest, or clear photos if reporting via email

A hotline attendant will return your call to ask additional questions if required before guiding you on how to proceed. Investigation of the suspect EPP can start with as little as a sending in a photo or sample, or having a Department Officer visit the property.

What happens if an Emergency Plant Pest is confirmed?

Identification an EPP must be confirmed by a two separate diagnostic laboratories before any control action is taken. A temporary quarantine zone restricting movement of material may be established while awaiting confirmation of the suspect EPP.

Once an EPP is confirmed, notification is provided to state and national governments as well as affected industries. An official response according to a nationally approved Response Plan may occur. For an EPP in NSW, NSW DPI will take the lead. Grower involvement is central to an effective EPP response and NSW DPI will work with growers through all stages of the response. Strict rules for confidentiality are in place to protect individual growers.

Growers are encouraged to report EPPs regardless of the effect a response may have on their production. The short term effects of an EPP response are highly preferable to the long term management costs that would be suffered if the pest became established.

Further reading

NSW DPI PrimeFact 1314 – Protect your property from plant biosecurity threats (PUB13/90)

NSW DPI PrimeFact 1315 – Protecting New South Wales from exotic plant pests (PUB13/91)

More information

Plant Health Australia www.planthealthaustralia.com.au

Farm Biosecurity www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

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