

Keep it Clean for Field Vegetables

Other farm management options to reduce pests

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Quarantine

After investing time and money in cleaning your farm and implementing practices to make it harder for pests to get in, it is vital that the risk of carrying insect pests and diseases in is also minimised. This comes down to quarantine and exclusion. The check and control points identified as part of the farm set up are the basis to excluding pests.

Do everything you can to reduce the chance that anyone or anything going into your crop may be carrying an insect pest, nematode, disease or weed seed. Everything going into the 'clean' zone and again everything going into the production area must be checked, cleaned and if need be, disinfected first. You need to be especially careful with any item that is not new. If you are reusing anything used with a previous crop, it must be well cleaned and disinfected.

Australian border quarantine

Australia has very strict quarantine laws. This is to prevent plant and animal pests and diseases coming into Australia. It is illegal to bring in any plant material, this includes seeds, into Australia without first declaring it and having it inspected. Many of the new diseases in Australia have come from illegal imports. The damage caused to an industry can be serious and the fines are also significant.

Local quarantine - Seedlings

If buying seedlings, inspect them upon delivery. If any plants have disease symptoms or insect pests, tell the delivery person and supplier immediately.

“Do not plant out any plants that look unhealthy or infested with pests”

Remove the diseased looking plants or sample insects and submit them for diagnostic testing. Seedling may need to be treated before planting in the field. Note that some insects may transmit viruses which may take a few days or weeks to show symptoms. Have a special designated clean, insect-screened area or quarantine field away from



your production areas in which to store seedlings prior to transplanting them. Seedlings need to be placed on raised benches or racks – never on the ground.

“All seedlings are quarantined and checked that they are free from pests and diseases before they are planted out”

If propagating your own seedlings, have a separate quarantine nursery away from your production area. Before moving any plants into the production area, check them for signs of insect pests or diseases. Do not plant out any plants that are, or appear to be, diseased or infested with insect pests.

Worker and visitor hygiene

People are one of the most likely ways that insect pests and diseases will enter a crop.

All workers on the farm need to be responsible for not bringing potential problems into the farm. Instruct workers not to visit other farms before coming to work. If they have come from another farm then they have changed clothes or overalls and have disinfected hands, boots and all tools before entering your farm.

Visitors such as agricultural advisors need to be aware of their potential to transport pests and diseases and should inform you if they have been on a property with a significant pest or disease outbreak.

“Employees and visitors ideally should not visit another farm before entering your farm”

Many insects are attracted to certain colours, particularly yellow. Sticky traps which are used for monitoring flying insects are made in yellow and blue for this reason. Many flying insects are attracted to yellow. Thrips are also readily attracted to blue and white. Insects can easily hitch a ride into a crop or through a crop on people’s clothing. To reduce the risk of this happening, yellow, mid-blue and white clothing should be avoided.

Healthy well grown crops are more likely to resist diseases and not attract pests than poorly grown or stressed crops. It is important to pay attention to crop nutrition and irrigation to maintain a healthy crop.

“Irrigation and nutrition are managed optimally for plant needs”

Tobacco can carry some diseases that infect some field crops particularly solanaceous crops – tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants or chillies. If employees or visitors are permitted to smoke on your premises, make sure that they wash their hands before working in the crop.

Bathroom facilities with suitable hand-washing facilities need to be accessible to all farm workers. Hand sanitisers should be available in all vehicles, in packing sheds and staff rooms; staff and visitors should be encouraged to be used before handling the crop or produce.

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