

Abandoned and neglected orchard biosecurity management in NSW

Operation Orange | Abandoned and/or neglected orchard

Purpose

Operation Orange was developed to assess the biosecurity risk to working commercial horticultural enterprises posed by neighbouring abandoned and/or neglected orchards in and around Orange in Central West NSW.

The outcome of the operation was to maintain market access by preventing, controlling and managing the negative impacts of pests and diseases to commercial horticultural enterprises.

Background

Abandoned and/or neglected orchards have the potential to be breeding grounds for pests and diseases, which may spread to other growers and impact a wide range of horticultural industries.

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* and the *Biosecurity Regulation 2017* allows DPI to take compliance and enforcement action against the owners of abandoned and/or neglected orchards to ensure biosecurity threats are managed and risks are mitigated against their [general biosecurity duty](#).

As well as taking appropriate compliance and enforcement action, the operation aimed to raise awareness, provide

education and undertake enforcement action where appropriate to land owners of properties that posed a biosecurity risk.

What we did

A total of 79 properties were inspected as part of Operation Orange. These properties were identified primarily from reports of non-compliance received by DPI and locations are outlined below:

Orange	18
Canobolas	17
Nashdale	16
Springside	7
Clergate	5
Borenore	4
Lucknow	2
Forrest Reefs	2
Shadforth	2
Lidster	2
Mullion Creek	1
Springhill	1
TOTAL	79

Key biosecurity indicators

Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance officers assessed the following key biosecurity indicators during on-site inspections to determine if there was a biosecurity risk present:

- Was there any disease or pests present at the property (exotic or endemic)?
- Did the property pose a biosecurity risk to surrounding orchard growers?
- Were surrounding orchards in a state of neglect or abandonment, or were they being managed appropriately to minimise and manage a biosecurity risk?

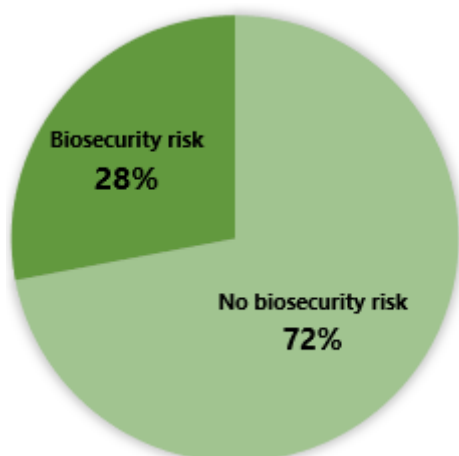
After the inspection, properties were deemed as either posing or not posing a biosecurity risk.

What we found

Inspection results

Of the 79 properties inspected:

- **57** (72%) posed no biosecurity risk;
- **22** (28%) posed a biosecurity risk.



The majority of properties inspected were not deemed to pose a biosecurity risk due to the following reasons:

- a management plan was already in place;

- the properties were used for grazing only and did not have fruit trees;
- the properties were small house blocks with non-commercial fruit trees only;
- the properties were well maintained and do not require intervention.

Compliance and enforcement action

The 22 properties identified as posing a biosecurity risk, 6 voluntarily completed mitigation works. The following action was taken to mitigate biosecurity risks identified for the remaining 16 properties:

Action/Sanction issued	Number of properties
Biosecurity Direction	14
Biosecurity Undertaking	2

Strategies to manage biosecurity risk

Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance officers proposed the following strategies to owners of the properties identified as posing a biosecurity risk in a bid to mitigate these risks:

- ongoing spraying programs;
- regular pruning and slashing;
- removing rotting fruit;
- bulldozing and removal of trees and/or vines;
- compilation of management plans;
- providing educational material to assist with identification of pests.

Reasons for neglect and abandonment

Throughout the operation, the primary reasons that properties fell into neglect or abandonment were:

- industry downturn;
- financial issues; or
- absent landowners

Remedial actions

Below is an example of remedial action taken by a landholder to mitigate biosecurity risk on their property:

Before:



After:



Outcomes

Operation Orange was successful in identifying several biosecurity risks associated with orchards that had at some stage been operated in a commercial capacity.

Inspections by DPI provided in some circumstances sufficient motivation for some work to be undertaken by property owners to satisfy the requirements of minimising a biosecurity risk. In other cases, enforcement sanctions were issued to assist in addressing biosecurity risks.

The operation also raised awareness within the local area of the need to maintain orchards and or vineyards in a sufficient manner to mitigate biosecurity risks. Land owners subject to inspections should now better understand the requirements of the [Biosecurity Act 2015](#) and their general biosecurity duty.

Next steps

Part of the ongoing strategy to manage orchards and vineyards in the Orange and surrounding areas will be via regular surveillance undertaken by the local compliance staff.

Future operations for 2018-2019 are planned for the Griffith and Bilpin regions.

More information

For further information visit:
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity>

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