

## Biosecurity Advice Update

### Pest

*Xanthomonas citri* Citrus Canker

### Date

17 September 2018

### Location

Northern Territory and Western Australia

### Situation Update

- The nationally coordinated response to locate and remove plants affected by citrus canker is on-track.
- On-the-ground response teams remain in place in the Northern Territory and are progressing with removal and disposal activities.
- Western Australia has completed its removal and disposal activities and is now conducting post destruction surveillance in the Restricted Areas.
- The status remains at eleven infected premises in the Northern Territory and three in northern Western Australia.
- This number may increase as tracing identifies the location of risk plants. Finding these infected plants provides confidence that the tracing system is working.
- Available evidence indicates that citrus canker is still restricted to potted plants in the home and garden sector, and all infected premises are linked to a single source premise in Darwin.
- The majority of citrus canker infections have been found on three different varieties of lime, but grapefruit and lemons are also high-risk plants.
- Citrus canker has not been detected in any commercial citrus orchards or in any other Australian states. This has been determined through recent surveillance in citrus production areas
- The Northern Territory and Western Australia have put movement controls and quarantine measures in place to contain the disease.
- Other jurisdictions have introduced domestic movement controls to prevent the entry of citrus canker hosts and carriers, plants and plant material, soil, equipment and machinery, from control areas in the NT and WA. However, stringent measures are in place to allow for the safe interstate trade of fruit.
- The NT's Department of Primary Industry and Resources is urging residents to report if they have purchased any citrus plants since January 2017, so they can be checked for signs of infection. It's important for residents to be aware that citrus plants for home gardens or that will be kept in pots, present the highest risk of spreading the disease.
- Similarly, the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is urging residents in the state's north to report any citrus plants purchased since January 2017, so they can be checked.

- A nationally agreed response plan is in place, with technical advice provided by the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP). The plan was endorsed by the National Management Group (NMG). Affected industry groups are represented in both the CCEPP and NMG.
- The aim of the response plan is to delimit and contain citrus canker by detecting and destroying infected plants.
- The response plan is being backed up by three specialist working groups. The first is focussed on possible disease-spread scenarios; the next group on tracing data that is critical for locating diseased plants; and the last group is developing a national surveillance strategy that will ultimately prove to our trading partners that we are free of the disease.
- Detailed information is also available at [outbreak.gov.au](http://outbreak.gov.au), including more on the activities of the working groups.
- Citrus canker has previously been detected in Australia but has been eradicated in each instance. We know that this current incident is not the re-emergence of citrus canker from a previous outbreak.

---

## Progress of field activities

- Other states conducted surveillance and testing because of the tracing information they received from the NT. In total around 7,000 traces were investigated across Australia, and no canker has been found.
- The premises surveyed include retail outlets, residential properties, and production nurseries. There are no traces to commercial citrus orchards, however, they have been inspected as a precaution.
- Western Australia has destroyed 1,520 host plants in Restricted Areas. This phase of the response is now complete but there will be ongoing surveillance in these areas to look for any disease recurrence.
- In the NT a total of 1,277 properties have been surveyed and 11,994 host plants have been destroyed on infected properties. The removal of plants in the wider restricted area is now underway.

## Biosecurity and reporting

### Advice for growers

- Growers should put on-farm biosecurity measures in place as a general practice to reduce the chance of pests and disease getting into their orchards. These include:
  - o using pest-free propagation material and seedlings, sourced from a reputable supplier
  - o putting up farm biosecurity signs on gates and fences to manage visitors coming onto your property
  - o avoiding the sharing of equipment
  - o keeping equipment and vehicles clean and free of plant matter
  - o wearing clean clothing before visiting other growers' properties

- o teaching your farm workers on-farm hygiene practices, what to look for and how to report unusual pests and diseases.
- Production nurseries can put measures in place to reduce the chance of pests and disease getting into their cropping systems. These include:
  - o using pest-free propagation material including seeds and budwood, sourced from a reputable supplier/scheme such as Auscitrus
  - o using pest-free vegetative propagation material sourced from a known and reputable supplier where motherstock is inspected and found free of disease symptoms
  - o implement industry based biosecurity programs across the production system that support procedures for sourcing, inspecting, treating and managing plant material
  - o putting up farm biosecurity signs on gates and fences to manage visitors and vegetative material coming onto your property
  - o avoid sharing equipment
  - o keep equipment and vehicles clean and free of plant matter
  - o wear clean clothing before visiting other growers' properties
  - o ensure farm workers are aware of on-farm hygiene practices, know what to look for and how to report unusual pests and diseases.
- You can find out more about on-farm biosecurity at [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) or for production nurseries at [nurseryproductionfms.com.au](http://nurseryproductionfms.com.au)

## Reporting

- Early detection, reporting and not moving plants suspected of being infected is vital, and will give us the best chance of eradicating this disease.
- Signs of infection can look like other bacterial diseases that are known in northern Australia. All suspect symptoms must be reported.
- If you think you have a plant with citrus canker, or if you have sourced citrus plants since January 2017 from the Northern Territory or northern Western Australia, please contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. This will put you in touch with the department of primary industries or agriculture in your state or territory.
- You should not collect a sample or move the suspect plant.
- Most states have an app or mechanism for submitting a photo for preliminary diagnosis. The photo should be a clear image of the suspect plant, the disease symptoms and the plant's label, if you still have it.

## Interstate travellers

- Interstate travellers also have a role in preventing the spread of pests and diseases. Do not take fruit, whole plants or plant cuttings into another state or territory without checking first. You can do this on the Interstate Quarantine website which is [interstatequarantine.org.au](http://interstatequarantine.org.au).

- Quarantine bins are in place for travellers on all major routes out of the restricted area in Western Australia. Please place all citrus fruit or citrus plant material in these bins before you leave the area.

## About the disease

- Citrus canker is a contagious disease caused by the bacteria *Xanthomonas citri* sub species *citri* which can affect all citrus plants including native species. There are also non-citrus hosts for this disease such as elephant apple, native Rutaceae species, wampee and white sapote.
- Citrus canker is native to South East Asia. It infects a plant through wounds and natural openings on leaves, stems, thorns and fruit.
- It can be spread rapidly over short distances, particularly in tropical and subtropical climates by wind-blown rain. Overhead irrigation systems can also spread the disease. Long distance spread occurs through cyclones, or by people moving infected plant material or equipment.
- The disease presents as lesions or cankers at infection sites and severely impacts fruit quality and yield.
- Symptoms are exacerbated by injury caused by feeding activity of the insect citrus leaf miner, which is the larvae of a small moth widely distributed in Australia.
- The symptoms of citrus canker include blister-like lesions on both sides of the leaves that are raised, tan to brown in colour and are surrounded by an oily, water-soaked margin and a yellow ring or halo. Large or older lesions may have a crater-like appearance.
- Premature fruit drop can occur, along with defoliation, twig dieback and general tree decline. In severe cases, it can lead to tree death.
- Images of infected fruit can be found at [outbreak.gov.au](http://outbreak.gov.au)
- Australia is currently able to claim the absence of all types of citrus cankers. This is because the current incident in the NT and WA is under an official national eradication program. This is important in terms of maintaining access to export markets for our citrus industry.

## Trade

- The International Plant Protection Convention has been notified, in line with our international reporting requirements when an emergency plant pest or disease is confirmed.
- Domestic movement restrictions are in place to prevent the entry of citrus canker hosts and carriers, plants and plant material, soil, equipment and machinery, from affected jurisdictions. This is to minimise any risk of the disease spreading.

## Imports/PEQ

- Only budwood material for use as nursery stock can be imported to Australia. This material must go into the Australian government's Post-Entry Quarantine facility for a minimum of 24 months and is subject to screening and testing for plant pathogens.

- Plants are regularly inspected for citrus canker and only shoot tip grafted plants free of diseases are released from biosecurity control. There have been no detections of citrus canker during the disease screening period.

**Hort  
Innovation**  
Strategic levy investment

**NURSERY  
FUND**

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)