

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU REPORT SOMETHING UNUSUAL?

In this article, you will learn what to do if you find something unusual on your property either in your crops or bees, and covers:

- how to report suspected [Emergency Plant Pests](#) (EPP)
- what investigations happen in the early stages after an EPP is reported
- what activities will likely happen on your property
- what support and advice is available to you.

Key points

- If you see anything unusual, report it as soon as possible to the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881**. Your call will automatically be directed to the relevant state or territory biosecurity agency.
- Every report to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline is taken seriously and investigated
- If your property is affected by an EPP, you will be offered support and advice from your local government agency and Melons Australia
- The earlier a suspected EPP is detected and reported, the better the chances of eradicating it and reducing long-term impacts to individual growers and our agriculture industry.

Reporting suspected pests and diseases

Australia has a great biosecurity system, and it is the role of every Australian to be on the lookout for unusual plant pests and diseases. Knowing what to look for, how to report it, and the importance of reporting quickly gives us the best chance at stopping the spread and reducing the likelihood that new pests and diseases are here to stay.

As a grower, you are likely to be the first to spot something unusual; whether it's an odd-looking insect; chew marks on a leaf, discolouration or other symptoms that you've never noticed before. As part of your regular crop monitoring and pest management activities, you will be on the lookout for any unusual pests or unfamiliar symptoms. If you notice anything you can't identify or suspect it may be an exotic pest or disease you must report it as soon as possible.

The national [Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881](#) is a dedicated number for reporting anything unusual. Calling the hotline will link you directly to the relevant state or territory agency for your location where you will be able to speak to someone to report your sighting. If your call is after business hours, you may be directed to record a message.

What is 'unusual'?

'Unusual' can mean different things to different people especially when you are looking at pests and the symptoms of disease. You don't need to be an expert but if you see any of the following you should take steps to report it:

- any insects, snails, or mites you don't recognise
- unusual symptoms on your crop or vegetation surrounding your property
- control measures that no longer work or are becoming less effective for known symptoms (there are many other reasons this may happen, but in some situations, it may indicate a new pest).

Remember, it's always better to report – even if it's a false alarm. Reporting can provide reassurance that there is nothing to worry about.

Several high priority pests are a concern to the melon industry. Find out more so you know what symptoms and signs to look out for. [Visit Plant Health Australia's [resource centre](#) to find out about your Industry's priority pests].

Why is it important to report anything unusual

All Australians have a legal obligation to report potential biosecurity risks, and it's essential you are aware of your obligations to minimise and manage risks on your property.

Australia's proof of freedom status is something we all enjoy as it allows us to trade with international partners and enjoy our unique way of life. We are free from many pests and diseases that have heavily impacted plant industries in other countries and the livelihoods and businesses that rely on them. The longer a pest or disease goes undetected, the further it can spread, reducing the chance of containment and eradication, or implementation of effective control measures. Long-term management and containment of unwanted pests can increase production costs and cause the complete decline of an industry.

What to do if you suspect you found something unusual

If you suspect you may have found an exotic plant pest or disease, follow these precautions:

- mark the area to make it easy to find again later and isolate the area immediately
- take [clear photos](#) or video of the damage to the plant and if possible the pest.
 - You can use GPS data attached to the photo to record the site's location.
- if possible, collect a sample of the plant that shows symptoms or the insect. This should be double-bagged and placed in your freezer and provided to biosecurity officers if necessary.
- restrict the movement of people, equipment or animals near the potentially affected area
- wash hands, clothes and boots that have been in contact with affected plant material or soil
- don't touch, move or transport affected plant material without advice from your state or territory biosecurity agency.

Most importantly, call the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** 1800 084 881 immediately.

What information to collect

If you find something unusual, collect as much information as you can, including:

- what you found
- when you found it
- where you found it
- what crop it was on
- how many you saw, or how it has impacted the crop (describe the symptoms)
- how widespread it is
- anything else that catches your attention.

You may be asked to provide this information when you report to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline.

What happens when you call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline

When you call the hotline, your report will generally be categorised based on the information you provide. You may receive a follow-up call to provide further details, or biosecurity staff may request to visit your property.

All reports are investigated, and it is far better to have a false alarm than a failure to identify a serious plant pest or disease.

What happens after a report has been made

If there is a reasonable suspicion that the plant pest or disease you reported is of concern, several activities will be carried out by the state or territory biosecurity agency both on and off your property (known as the lead agency) to further understand the situation.

The lead agency will:

- in consultation with the property owner, conduct trace forward and trace back to determine where the pest came from and where it may have travelled to
- engage with their state counterparts and peak plant industry bodies, to keep them updated and seek their advice.

This process is covered in detail in Article 3 '[Responding to an Emergency Plant Pest under the EPPRD](#).'

It may take time to correctly diagnose the pest or disease and determine whether control actions are needed and this may cause some uncertainty and angst, but the biosecurity agency will work with you to minimise disruption. Throughout these investigations (and the duration of a response) your personal information, including your address, remains confidential.

What happens on your property

As more information is known and diagnostics confirm whether the pest is an EPP, measures may be put in place to reduce the risk of the pest or disease spreading. These could include:

- restriction of operations in the immediately impacted area
- restricted movement of people, vehicles and machinery on and off the property
- restricted movement of all host material on and off the property
- implementation of decontamination processes for people, vehicles and machinery entering or leaving the property
- treatment and control measures to eradicate the pest/disease
- guidance on the activities that are still permitted on your property.

There are provisions under the EPPRD for growers who are directly impacted by response actions where they may be reimbursed for specific costs and losses arising from those actions. Referred to as Owner Reimbursement Costs (ORCs), these

are covered in future articles. Alternatively, you can find out more information on the [Plant Health Australia website](#).

What happens beyond your property gate

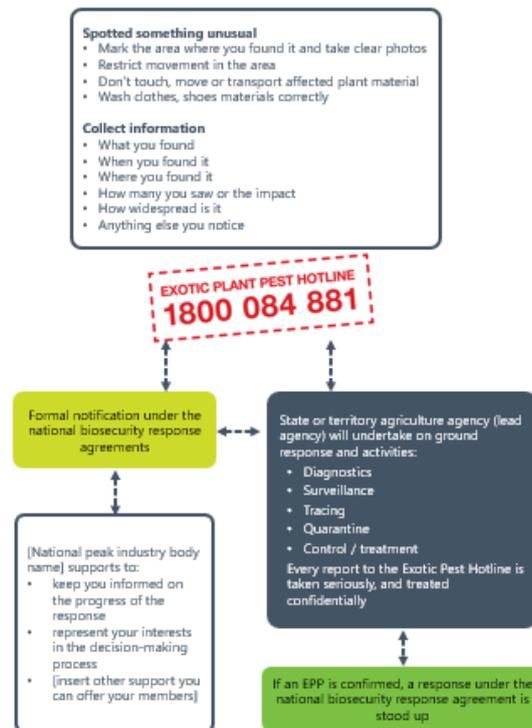
The biology of pests or diseases can vary greatly, influencing how far and quickly they could spread. Depending on the EPP, areas surrounding your property may also be subject to quarantine restrictions. Surveillance may be conducted across neighbouring properties and businesses that you have sent goods to or received goods from.

Throughout the process, the lead agency will keep you informed of what actions you need to take and what may be happening on your property. Melons Australia will also support you by providing answers to questions and addressing any concerns you have about how the response is being conducted.

The lead agency together with the Australian, state and territory governments, affected industries and Plant Health Australia, will meet regularly to progress the response. If you are an affected grower, you will be represented in this process Melons Australia who will advocate on behalf of your industry.

Through every stage of a response, it is important to keep up to date with the latest information as the situation and pace of the response can change quickly. The [Outbreak](#) website is a great resource to stay informed on the latest response information.

What happens when you make a report



If you see anything unusual, report it as soon as possible to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881.

Support during a response to a plant pest or disease

Being impacted by a biosecurity response can cause a great deal of stress and uncertainty. If your property is affected by a plant pest or disease, Melons Australia will work with you every step of the way.

We will:

- work with the lead agency to assist to minimise disruption to your business / our industry
- represent the industry's interests in the national decision-making process

The lead agency will:

- direct you on how to implement any biosecurity measures and response actions on your property
- seek advice and support from your industry body to implement response activities
- let you know about available counselling services, should you require them.

What happens next?

Once investigations have provided enough information to understand the size and nature of the incursion it can be determined whether a national eradication program will be undertaken.

The goal of responding is to eradicate the pest or disease and return to our proof of freedom status, and if that isn't possible, get affected industries back to business as quickly as possible.

We will cover how national responses are managed in more detail in Article 3, '[Responding to a plant pest under the EPPRD](#)'.

What you can do now

- Establish an active pest and disease monitoring program and record the results, even when nothing is found.
- Check your property frequently for new diseases, plant pests, and unusual symptoms.
- Familiarise yourself with the high-priority pests for melons. Visit Plant Health Australia's [resource centre](#) to find out more.
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- Keep the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881** handy for all staff to see.
- Ensure your staff and contractors, including agronomists, are aware of their reporting obligations.

This content has been developed in collaboration with Plant Health Australia to increase awareness of national response arrangements under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD).

Resources

Read: Want to learn more?

- [Pest reporting and responses information for growers Plant Health Australia factsheet](#)
- [What to do during an outbreak](#)
- [Plant pests and diseases - DAFF](#)
- [Report a pest or disease concern](#)
- [Visit pestid.com.au - an online Pest Identification tool](#)

Watch: View videos online to find out more

- [Biosecurity Bite: Exotic Plant Pests](#)
- Detect and Protect podcast: [Episode 6 - Khapra Beetle](#)

Learn: Free training available on BOLT

Free training is available on [Biosecurity Online Training platform \(BOLT\)](#). Register your free account to get started.

- [Growers - Pest Reporting and Responses course](#)
- [Researchers – Pest Reporting and Responding course](#)
- [Plant Surveillance](#)
- [Plant Biosecurity in Australia course](#)
- [Hitchhiker Pests](#)
- [Greenlife retailer pests and diseases](#)