

# Industry Update September 2020

## 1. Introduction

In order for the NT to demonstrate proof of freedom from citrus canker in 2020, National Response Plan version 5 was developed and implemented in 2020.

Version 5.0 is focused on verification of absence and proving freedom in the NT by the end of 2020 with the overall aim and outcome to remove regulatory measures across Australia and return to baseline surveillance.

## 2. Completion of delimitation and surveillance

Delimitation and surveillance activities to support the eradication efforts were completed at the end of 2019. During this phase of the program the following activities were completed:

- 16 infected premises (IPs) have been confirmed in the NT from 532 samples (32 positive) and over 15,000 plant inspections.
- This resulted in the establishment of 13 restricted areas (RAs), consisting of a declared quarantine area within a 600m radius of an infected plant, and two larger control areas.
- Within these RAs there were 3,942 premises (property lots) and 5,102 residences (including multiple unit blocks in urban areas). Surveillance was completed at all premises within RAs by September 2019. 1,570 properties (39%) were identified with host plants.
- A total of 6,192 host plants were removed in the RAs by December 2019 (via cut-stump method and herbicide application of Garlon in-ground, and completely removed if in a pot).
- Successfully resolved access to 240 properties for completion of surveillance and removal activities, where entry was initially refused.
- All properties where host plants were removed via cut-stump method (not potted plants) have undergone two rounds of re-growth surveillance.
- Of the 4,626 plants surveyed, 10% (465) of plants showed signs of non-symptomatic regrowth. In these cases, regrowth material was removed and the stump treated with a further herbicide application.
- Following removals, a host free or fallow period was established in all RAs. The host free period was lifted in Katherine on 20 November 2019, and in the greater Darwin rural area (GDRA) on 20 March 2020, removing all RAs and associated restrictions. The two control areas will remain in place until area freedom is declared for the NT.
- A further 6,939 plants were surveyed in Darwin and 1,047 surveyed in remote locations as part of the Areas of Interest surveillance.



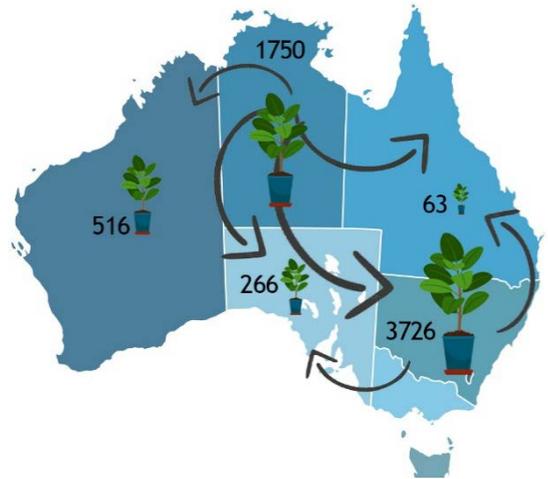
Citrus plant removals

## 3. Tracing Outcomes

All identified infected plants have been traced to a large wholesale production nursery located in the greater Darwin rural area. The risk period for infection has been defined as January 2017 to May 2018. A key objective has been to locate potentially infected plants which were moved off this site during the risk period.

Movement has been confirmed to the following locations:

- 3,726 plants to NSW of which 500 sublimates and kaffir limes were on-sold to nurseries in NSW, QLD and SA
- 63 plants to QLD
- 266 to SA
- 516 plants to WA
- 1,750 plants within the NT



Interstate trace plant numbers

By June 2020, of the 1750 plants that have been distributed within the NT, 1705 (97%) trace plants have been located:

- 527 have been destroyed in IPs and RAs,
- 98 have been confirmed dead or missing
- 1068 remain under surveillance

These remaining 1068 trace plants are undergoing a final round of surveillance to confirm there is still ongoing evidence of no symptoms of citrus canker. By June 2020, 934 (90%) had undergone a final round of surveillance and no citrus canker symptoms were detected.

## 4. Evidence of Absence

The program transitioned into gathering evidence of absence from citrus canker in early 2020 to support the NT's claim of successful eradication. This evidence will be collated into a 'proof of freedom' report which will be submitted to the national committees for consideration by the end of December 2020. On acceptance of this claim, the remaining restrictions and controls on citrus host plants in the NT, as well as the other states and territories will be lifted, and there will be a return to normal trade and surveillance across Australia.



Plant Health Officers undertaking citrus orchard inspections in Darwin's rural area

## National Citrus Canker Eradication Program

The National Citrus Canker Response Plan version 5.0 outlined the agreed surveillance activities which were required to demonstrate this evidence of absence. These activities are summarised in the table below.

Outcome	Activity	Progress at 30 June 2020
Evidence that NT IP-3 is free from disease	Ongoing monitoring of sentinel plants placed at NT IP-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40 plants distributed across IP-3 in Feb 2020</li> <li>Plants inspected every 30 days - four inspections conducted to date</li> <li>No signs of citrus canker identified</li> <li>One sample collected. Tested negative for citrus canker</li> </ul>
	Ongoing monitoring of sentinel plants placed at other IPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18 plants distributed across nine other IPs</li> <li>27 plants existing under permit on boundaries of RAs</li> <li>Plants inspected every 30 days - minimum of four inspections conducted to date</li> <li>No signs of citrus canker identified</li> </ul>
Trace plants verification surveillance	Census surveillance of all known trace plants in GDRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trace plant numbers have increased from 510 (Oct 2019) to 987 (current)</li> </ul>
	Census surveillance of all known trace plants in Katherine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trace plant numbers have increased from 46 (Oct 2019) to 81 (current)</li> </ul>
GDRA verification surveillance (656 surveillance events)	Surveillance of 79 host plants in GRDA rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>222 plants inspected - no citrus canker detected</li> </ul>
	Surveillance of 459 host plants in Darwin urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>265 plants inspected - no citrus canker detected</li> </ul>
	Surveillance of 118 host plants in Palmerston urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>36 plants inspected - no citrus canker detected</li> </ul>
Katherine verification surveillance	Surveillance of 656 host plants within the Katherine control area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>334 plants inspected - no citrus canker detected</li> </ul>
Compliance with movement restrictions and support for trade protocols	Routine inspection of local markets, green life retailers, transport companies and roadside stalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 nurseries inspected monthly</li> <li>Two transport companies inspected bi-monthly</li> </ul>
	Conduct market access surveillance inspections of commercial citrus and kaffir lime leaf orchards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28 orchard inspections across four orchards</li> </ul>
	Inspection and certification of citrus fruit (4 properties) and kaffir lime leaf (5 properties) consignments in accordance with national protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 600 pieces of fruit inspected per batch during 28 property inspections over 16,800 pieces of fruit inspected</li> <li>538 inspections (plant health certificates) conducted on consignments ranging from 2-50 boxes each. Consignments to NSW and VIC - Approx. 10 batches twice a week throughout the year inspecting approx. 6,000 leaves per week</li> </ul>

## 5. Communications Strategy

In November 2019, the NT Communications and Community Engagement Strategy was updated. The strategy supports the program to optimise tracing and surveillance through building awareness of importance of reporting host plants, encouraging industry and community participation and buy-in to the program, lowering industry and community resistance by promoting the benefits of adopting biosecurity behaviours, and enabling the provision of timely, consistent and accurate information for industry, residents and key stakeholders.

A summary of key activities in 2019-2020 includes:

- A three month digital, radio and print advertising campaign from November 2019 to February 2020 as a last call to action for the community to report their citrus plants for a free health check.
- A range of printed materials have been produced to support program activities including factsheets, information packs, posters, calling cards, magnets and road and sentinel signage.
- Radio advertising comprised five different ads: two calls to action, seasonal messaging during the wet season, continued control area restrictions and lifting of the restricted areas following the host free period. Radio ads were translated into two different Indigenous languages (Kriol and Yolngu Matha) for local Indigenous radio stations.
- 24/7 hotline ran until 15 May 2019 and now replaced by a mobile hotline number.
- Reporting available online through the NT government website or via email.
- An industry forum was held covering issues on trade protocols, other citrus pests and diseases, citrus beneficials (insects) and a general program update.
- Three industry and stakeholder newsletters have been produced and distributed directly by email and through the DPIR website, NT Farmers and other DPIR e-newsletters.
- Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, participated in 41 community engagement events including attendance at shows, community events, markets, shopping centre pop-ups, schools and colleges.
- A schools program was delivered to 11 schools, engaging over 1,000 students across the greater Darwin and Katherine areas. The schools presentation is currently being expanded into an online activity booklet and Teacher's Work Book.



## 6. Financial management

In November 2019, the NMG approved the National Response Plan Version 5.0 including its indicative budget for 2020 activities. The Program realised significant savings during 2019 which enabled the resourcing of the final phase of the response within the overall agreed budget, i.e. no additional funding was required to support the indicative budget for the National Response Plan version 5.0. The Program has continued to track under budget during 2020 and is expected to achieve significant savings against the indicative budget due to ongoing efficiencies. See the figure below showing program budget against actual expenditure for the period of the response.

