

Biosecurity Advice Update

Pest

Xanthomonas citri Citrus Canker

Date

24 Jun 2019

Location

Northern Territory and Western Australia

Key Points

- The current incursion of Citrus Canker was reported in April 2018 in NT and later reported in May 2018 in WA.
 - Removal and disposal activities is still being conducted in Northern Territory (NT)
 - Western Australia (WA) has completed its removal and disposal activities and is now conducting post destruction surveillance in the Restricted Areas to confirm that citrus canker is absent.
 - Citrus canker has not been detected in any commercial citrus orchards or in any other Australian states.
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Situation overview

- 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 (NT) and are progressing with removal and disposal activities.
- Western Australia (WA) has completed its removal and disposal activities. It is now conducting post destruction surveillance in the Restricted Areas to confirm that citrus canker is absent.
- There are sixteen infected premises in the NT and three in northern WA, following successful tracing activities. In May 2019 NT traced an infected plant (growing in a patio pot) to a location in suburban Darwin and have destroyed the citrus plant as per the protocol.
- This number may increase as tracing, surveillance and community reports identify the location of infected plants. Finding these infected plants provides confidence that the tracing and communication systems are working.
- Evidence to date 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.
- Most 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 NT and WA have put in place movement controls and quarantine measures 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 and kaffir lime leaves.
- The NT's Department of Primary Industry and Resources is urging residents to report any citrus plants, particularly those purchased or received since January 2017, so they can be checked for signs of infection.
- The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is urging residents in the state's north to report citrus plants of any age on their property so they can be checked.
- A nationally agreed response plan is in place, with technical advice being provided by the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP). The plan was endorsed by the National Management Group (NMG).
- In June 2019, the current response plan was reviewed and a report outlining a forward plan will be provided to the NMG.
- Nursery and Garden Industry Australia and Citrus Australia are represented in both the CCEPP and NMG.
- NMG agreed to a cost-shared budget of up to \$18.72 million to fund response activities until 31 December 2019. This budget includes costs for the initial Response Plan. The response is jointly funded by industry and government.
- The aim of the response plan is to eradicate citrus canker from Australia and reinstate country freedom status from the disease.
- Detailed information is also available at outbreak.gov.au.
- Citrus canker has previously been detected in Australia and has been eradicated in each instance. 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 as a result of the tracing information they received from the NT. In total around 7,000 traces were investigated across Australia, no citrus canker has been found outside the NT and WA.
- 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, more than 4,068 host plants have been destroyed in Restricted Areas. Ninety-one per cent of properties with host plants have been cleared.

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 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.
- 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 i.e BioSecure HACCP.
 - 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.

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 NT or northern WA 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.
- In the NT you can submit information and photos on-line via: <http://www.nt.gov.au>

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 <https://www.outbreak.gov.au/current-responses-to-outbreaks/citrus-canker>
- 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.