

Nursery Papers

December 2003

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Look. Be Alert. Call an Expert.

The new National Plant Health Awareness Campaign targeting the nursery and garden industry is encouraging commercial plant producers and retailers to regularly check their plants for unusual pest or disease signs.

We can all play a pivotal role in protecting our livelihoods and the future of our industry from new pests and diseases. If you spot anything unusual, report it immediately to the *Exotic Plant Pest Hotline* on 1800 084 881.

• Your Levy at Work •

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Nursery & Garden Industry Australia



Horticulture Australia

Spotted anything unusual?

As an island continent, Australia has remained relatively disease free. However, growing international travel and trade is increasing the potential risks of new exotic pests and diseases entering our country. Even the current strict quarantine arrangements cannot ensure Australia's plant industries are totally protected from exotic pests and diseases.

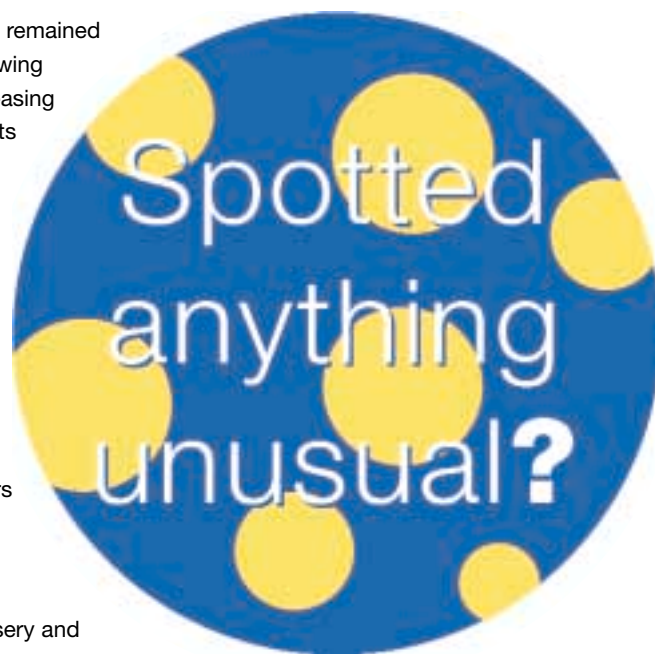
Accordingly, Plant Health Australia (PHA) has launched its first national plant health awareness campaign targeting commercial plant producers and retailers with the message:

'Look. Be Alert. Call an Expert.'

PHA is urging businesses in the nursery and garden sector to take action if they spot any sign of unusual pests or diseases to help protect Australia's plant industries, worth \$13 billion in total each year. This includes the \$400 million nursery and garden industry.

Plant health is not only an important issue for individual businesses, but for our industry as a whole and for the national economy. New exotic pests and diseases pose a major and continued threat to our significant plant industry exports, with potential serious long-term ramifications for trade and market access.

PHA Program Manager, Mr Rodney Turner, says it is important for individual businesses to implement biosecurity measures.



Plant Health Australia is urging nursery and garden businesses to take action, using this colourful artwork to promote their national plant health awareness campaign.

"It is important for the long-term profitability and sustainability of the industry," said Mr Turner. "Good biosecurity practices reduce the need for management measures, such as pesticide sprays, which in turn, leads to reduced costs for production."

"This also ensures that the greatest diversity of material is available for sale – exotic pest incursions could potentially lead to restrictions on the sale of certain varieties."

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What is biosecurity and what can you do?

Biosecurity is a general description for a series of measures designed to protect our nation, states, regions and individual farming properties or businesses from the entry and spread of exotic threats, for example exclusion, eradication and control.

You can have a major impact on the future of your business and the wider industry. By following the steps, you help make an important contribution to ensuring the nursery and garden industry remains free of new exotic pests and diseases.

There are practical steps you can take to ensure better biosecurity. For producers these include:

- Regularly inspecting all stock and reporting any unusual signs;
- Ensuring you are accredited under the Nursery Industry Accreditation

Scheme Australia (NIASA) and that you follow all the plant hygiene standards;

- Following biosecurity measures if visiting other nurseries and when returning to your property or business;
- Undertaking an IPM workshop; and
- Putting systems in place to deal with contractors and visitors to ensure pests and diseases are not introduced into your nursery.

For retailers, practical steps to ensure better biosecurity include:

- Regularly inspecting all stock and reporting any unusual signs to the producer/distributor; and
- Ensuring your staff can identify common pest and diseases.



A simple shoe dip can help maintain plant hygiene, Proteaflora Nursery, Vic.



Discarded plants and split media should be collected regularly and then contained in a dedicated area, Smart's Nurseries, SA.

What is being done to achieve industry biosecurity?

The Nursery and Garden Industry, through its membership of Plant Health Australia (PHA), is developing a national Industry Biosecurity Plan (IBP) to actively identify and manage pest and disease risks to the industry.

The Nursery and Garden Industry Biosecurity Plan will:

- identify and prioritise exotic threats,
- provide detailed pest risk assessment of high-priority threats,
- identify risk mitigation measures;
- put in place contingency plans to respond to any outbreak;
- generate awareness of biosecurity issues.

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How will an Industry Biosecurity Plan (IBP) benefit our industry?

The development of a coordinated IBP for the Australian nursery and garden industry will reduce the risk and financial impact of exotic incursions through:

- an enhanced capacity to plan for, and respond to, exotic incursions;
- an enhanced industry and public awareness of risk management and risk mitigation strategies;
- strong industry involvement;
- identifying appropriate diagnostic capability and technical expertise;
- identifying the likely financial, social and environmental costs associated with priority biosecurity risks;
- developing suitable recovery and restructuring procedures during and after an exotic plant pest incursion, which would include documented procedures for demonstrating area freedom to ensure future market access.

What if I find something unusual?

If you spot an unusual pest or disease (not an endemic or common garden pest), report it immediately to the *Exotic Plant Pest Hotline* on 1800 084 881.

When you call the hotline you will be connected with the agriculture department in your state or territory. Depending on the nature of the call, you'll be directed to the right person to assess the problem, and arrange any follow up investigation.



IPM workshops can provide valuable pest management training for staff.



Ensure restricted access to growing areas, Advantage Plant Production, NSW.



Crop protection programs are an integral part of the NIASA scheme, Avondale Nurseries, NSW.

Exotic Plant
Pest Hotline:
1800 084 881

PHA Website:
www.planthealthaustralia.com.au

Do you have good biosecurity in place? Take the quick quiz.

Producers

- 1 Do you wash footwear and equipment before entering or leaving high risk areas on your nursery?
- 2 Have you identified areas on your property that access should be restricted to, such as propagation areas, in order to minimise movement of soil borne disease?
- 3 Would you report suspicious pests to your local Department of Agriculture as soon as detected?
- 4 Do you try to buy seed and mother stock material that is certified or accredited as being free from pests?
- 5 Have you learned to identify local pests so you can recognise something different should it occur?

- 6 Do you work with others in your industry to raise the awareness of biosecurity?
- 7 Do you minimise access of outside people and or contractors to the nursery?
- 8 Are you accredited under NIASA?
- 9 Do you follow all the plant hygiene procedures in the NIASA standards?
- 10 If visiting other nurseries do you observe the biosecurity precautions as appropriate for visiting and then when returning to your own property or business?

Others

- 11 Have you learned to identify local pests so you can recognise something different should it occur?
- 12 Would you report suspicious pests to your local Department of Agriculture as soon as detected?
- 13 Do you work with others in your industry to raise the awareness of biosecurity?
- 14 Do you purchase products from accredited businesses or from those that follow the NIASA plant hygiene procedures?

How did you rate?

If you had more No's than Yes's, you may need to make changes to ensure biosecurity in your business.



Sampling growing media for soil borne diseases is easy, Baileys Fertilisers, WA.

For further information on PHA and the national plant health awareness campaign see the PHA website www.planthealthaustralia.com.au or for more information on biosecurity planning contact Program Manager, Mr Rodney Turner rodney@phau.com.au or NGIA info@ngia.com.au

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