



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture**

# Plant health surveillance

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## The role of our community in protecting Australia from plant pests and diseases

June 2019



**Australia's geographic isolation, and more than a century of strong quarantine measures, have kept our nation free of many of the plant pests and diseases found elsewhere in the world.**

**This freedom protects the beauty of our unique environment, keeps our cities and towns healthy, and allows our agricultural industries to flourish and enjoy an enviable reputation at home and overseas as a supplier of 'clean and green' produce.**

**But increasing numbers of incoming passengers, cargo and mail, as well as factors like a faster spread of plant pests and diseases around the globe and climate change, is making us more vulnerable to the threat of new or 'exotic' plant pests and diseases.**

**As a result, plant health surveillance or biosecurity surveillance—checking for pests and signs of disease in plants, recording the results and reporting anything unusual—is becoming more important.**

**Together we can keep Australia free from damaging plant pests and diseases.**

## **Plant health surveillance and the Australian community**

Each of us knows our own environment better than anyone else, so we can all help by monitoring places where we live and work, and reporting suspicious symptoms or signs of plant pests without delay. This is known as general surveillance.

### ***What all of us can do***

#### **Report a pest or disease concern in your backyard or on the farm**

Seen something unusual in your backyard or on your farm? Report it, even if you're not sure.

Pests and diseases can spread quickly over large distances. It's essential that you report what you find as soon as possible. This gives us the best chance of containing it before it spreads.

**IF YOU SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL,  
CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE**

**1800 084 881**

**Ring the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline: 1800 084 881** which will be answered by your local department of agriculture.

Most of the time the pest won't be anything serious, but reports are encouraged. Experts can quickly establish if the pest or sick plant you see is anything out of the ordinary, and it's better to have a false alarm than miss out on picking up a new invader.

Many significant detections in Australia have come from someone noticing something unusual and alerting authorities. **Tell others to keep an eye out as well—spread the word about watching for exotic pests.**

#### **Found something suspicious in goods, containers or parcels?**

Keep an eye on all cargo, containers or parcels arriving through airports, seaports and in international mail. If you see something unusual or unexpected, secure it and report it immediately.

You can call the **See. Secure. Report.** Hotline on 1800 798 636 to speak to specially trained officers who investigate all reports related to imported items, or you can complete the online reporting form at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/report>.

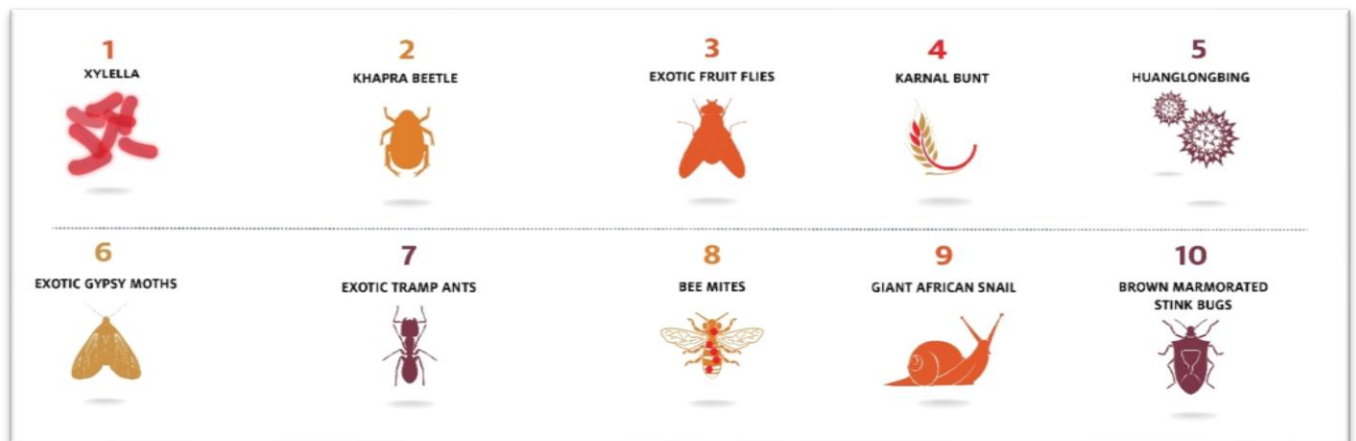
**You will not be prosecuted** if you or someone you know has accidentally imported risk material.

## 'Top 40' Exotic and Unwanted plant pests and diseases

Not sure what to look for? The Australian Government Department of Agriculture has compiled a list of the nation's 'Top 40 exotic and unwanted' plant pests and diseases. These are pests that threaten our agricultural industries, our environment, and even human health.

The list includes a bacterial infection that could ruin our wine industry, a snail the size of a human hand, and a beetle smaller than the head of a matchstick that could ruin our \$11 billion grain industry. Exotic invasive ants can sting people as well as pests and livestock, and bee mites can kill our bees.

All Australians need to work together to keep these invaders out. Here's the Top 10:



Learn about the most serious pest threats to Australia at [agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/plant](http://agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/plant).

### *People who live or work near ports need to be particularly vigilant*

If a 'hitchhiker pest' like the brown marmorated stink bug somehow sneaks past our border controls then people living near ports or working with cargo will often be the first to spot it. This nasty bug is currently eating (and stinking) its way around the world, so we all need to keep watch and keep it out of Australia.

### Brown marmorated stink bug (Halyomorpha halys)



Finding a new pest quickly is our best chance to get rid of it. Otherwise it is likely to spread, and may be here to stay. When it comes to biosecurity, prevention is always better than cure.

## Take care not to spread pests within Australia

Most Australians know that they cannot bring certain things in from overseas, but there are also rules about not carrying some goods into another state or territory, to prevent the spread of pests, diseases or weeds within Australia.

We all need to take care not to spread plant pests when we travel interstate or out of our region, and when we move house, or transport plants and plant products. Some pests can spread in soil, so even mud on vehicles and boots can be a problem.

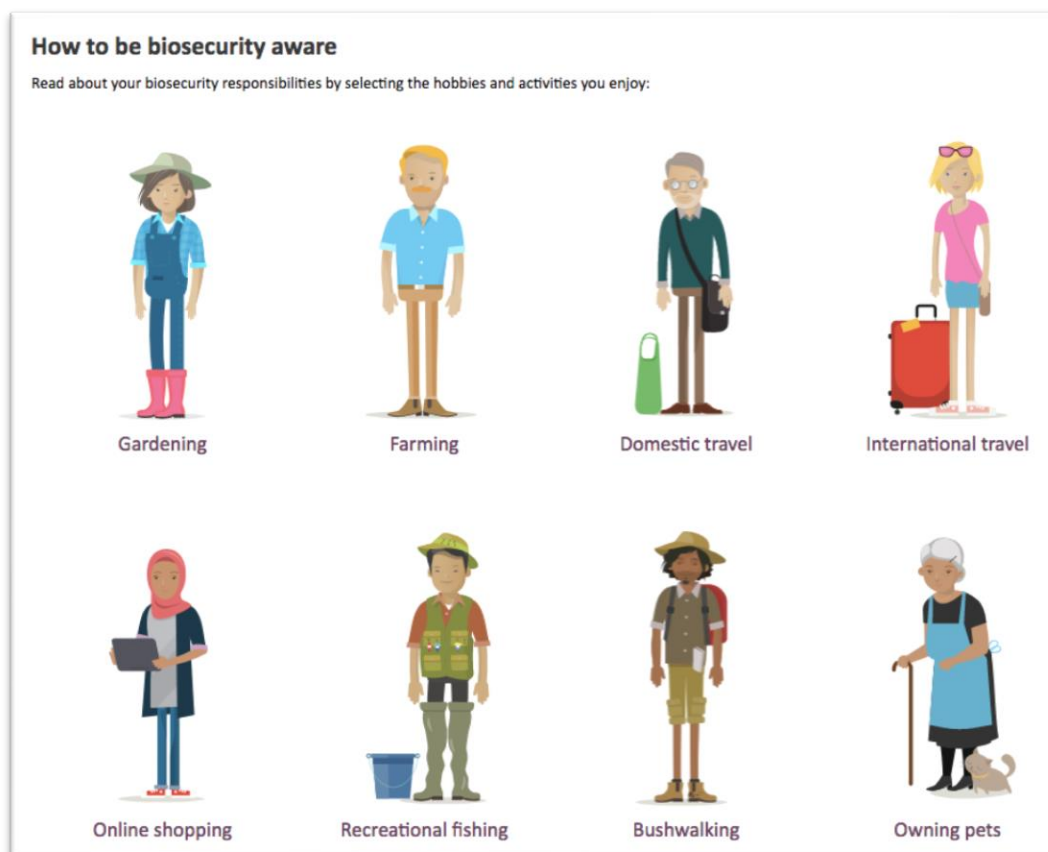
The Interstate Quarantine website holds information about pests that are confined to only some parts of Australia, and shows the biosecurity zones that impose restrictions on travellers to prevent pest spread [interstatequarantine.org.au](http://interstatequarantine.org.au)

You can also work with your neighbours or grower groups to reduce the risks of pests spreading in your local area. In the eastern States, Queensland fruit fly is managed this way, and in the west, Mediterranean fruit fly requires control efforts from everyone, on the land and in towns and cities, to stop it spreading. Fruit flies are highly damaging to many fruits and vegetables, both in gardens and on farms.

## Biosecurity Matters—at home, on holiday, and online

Many people are familiar with quarantine at the border and in airports, but there are many other things that we can all do to protect Australia from plant pests, diseases and weeds.

Find out ways to play your part at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-matters>



*Together we can keep Australia free from damaging plant pests and diseases*



## Where to find out more

**Find out how and why Biosecurity Matters** in everyday activities like shopping online and gardening at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-matters>

**Be inspired by the winners of the Australian Biosecurity Awards** <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/australia/public-awareness/aba>

**Download the free Farm Biosecurity Planner** from [farmbiosecurity.com.au/planner](http://farmbiosecurity.com.au/planner) or get the smartphone app from [farmbiosecurity.com.au/farmbiosecurity-app](http://farmbiosecurity.com.au/farmbiosecurity-app).

**For travelling or moving goods within Australia** you can find out more about your biosecurity obligations on the Australian Interstate Quarantine website at <https://www.interstatequarantine.org.au/>

**Plant biosecurity, the system that protects us and key pest threats:** Plant Health Australia's National Plant Biosecurity Status Report is a useful resource which you can find at [planthealthaustralia.com.au/npbsr](http://planthealthaustralia.com.au/npbsr)

**Take action against Australia's Top 40 Exotic and Unwanted Plant Pests:** information and videos available on the [Department of Agriculture website](http://www.agriculture.gov.au)

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**Citrus growers can download their industry's national surveillance strategy** from [planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/national-citrus-biosecurity-surveillance-strategy](http://planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/national-citrus-biosecurity-surveillance-strategy)

**Foresters can download their industry's national surveillance strategy** from [planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/national-forest-biosecurity-surveillance-strategy](http://planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/national-forest-biosecurity-surveillance-strategy).