

What to expect when Panama TR4 is detected on your property



When there is a detection of Panama disease tropical race 4 (Panama TR4) on a new property, it can be a very challenging time for the grower involved. It's hard to know what to expect and what will be expected of you. The below information aims to prepare growers for what will take place on their property when a plant showing symptoms of Panama TR4 is sampled and later confirmed to have the disease.

Note: *This factsheet applies to anyone who occupies the land where an infected plant is detected. Individuals may be an owner or occupier of the land.*

For simplicity, this factsheet will refer to all individuals as a 'grower'.

For more information visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au or call **13 25 23**

The Panama TR4 Program is a joint initiative between the Queensland Government and the Australian Banana Growers' Council.



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Routine surveillance by Panama TR4 Program officers

Surveillance officers look for and identify plants that show external symptoms consistent with Panama TR4. When a plant shows symptoms, an officer will flag the plant and inform you. Best biosecurity practice would be for you to isolate the area to reduce traffic and soil movement and to not interfere with the plant.



2

Program officers assess and sample the symptomatic plant

Surveillance officers will establish a mutually convenient time for the plant to be examined internally, and sampled for laboratory diagnosis. The plant will be marked and a sign will be placed on the plant to indicate that a sample has been taken.

3

Diagnostic testing takes place

There is a suite of tests undertaken in the laboratory to determine the presence or absence of Panama TR4 in the plant sample. You will receive a letter with details of the sample and details of an officer you can contact if you have any questions or concerns.



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The grower is informed of a positive PCR result and given a suspect property notice

You will be immediately contacted when the diagnostic test, polymerase chain reaction (PCR), returns a positive diagnosis to Panama TR4. The positive PCR test indicates strong evidence of presence of the disease, however further diagnostic testing is needed to provide a conclusive result. This can take up to four weeks.

You will receive a suspect property (SP) Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4 (notice), which places biosecurity requirements on the property. This SP notice remains in place while presence of the disease is being confirmed through vegetative compatibility group (VCG) diagnosis.

The biosecurity requirements of the SP notice aim to:

- avoid soil, plant material or any other risk item being moved off the suspect property
- limit the potential spread of the disease
- ensure staff and visitors have access to cleaning and disinfection equipment.

NOTE: An SP notice is intended to limit the spread of contaminated soil and plant material from the property and may not be as comprehensive as a notice that is applied to a property where the disease has been confirmed through VCG diagnosis.

Once an SP notice is received, a public announcement is made by both the Program and the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) that a suspect case of Panama TR4 has been detected. The general location of the suspect property is given, however identifying details of the grower and property are withheld. At this time you may want to contact your ABGC Communications Team who will assist you with all media enquiries, interview requests or other media-related issues.

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Program activities commence on the suspect property

A Property Operations Surveillance Team (POST) Manager will be designated to the property. They will provide biosecurity information and guidance and assist you to meet the notice requirements. One round of intensive surveillance will be conducted by surveillance officers to determine the extent of the disease on the suspect property. Officers walk down every second row looking for external symptoms of the disease.

Program officers will meet with you to:

- identify any links or risk pathways to or from other properties
- understand the operational activities of the property, both internal and external operations
- support you in understanding the requirements of the SP notice.

Program officers may also need to assess operational activities unique to your property to determine the biosecurity risk and develop risk mitigation requirements where necessary.



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The grower is informed of a positive VCG result and given an infested property notice

You will be informed when diagnostic testing, vegetative compatibility group (VCG), has returned a positive result to Panama TR4. You will receive a confirmation letter, diagnostic report and an infested property (IP) Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4.

The intent of the IP notice is to restrict soil and plant material from leaving the affected property and manage any areas of infestation on your property. It aims to contain the disease and protect the broader industry from the spread of Panama TR4.

The IP notice places strict biosecurity requirements on the property. The content will be operationally relevant to the infested property and will take into consideration all the information the Program has collected about your property and its operations.

A sample notice and guide to understanding what the IP notice covers are available for viewing at www.publications.qld.gov.au

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(A) Destruction of plants begins

Destruction of banana plants around and including the infected plant is required as prescribed by the Queensland Biosecurity Manual. Program officers will guide you and /or your staff on the destruction process and a destruction zone will be established.

(B) Program officers continue to support the grower

A small team of Program officers are available to assist you. The team will also monitor business operations to ensure requirements of the IP notice are met.



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Further meetings may take place

Program officers may seek additional information around business operations and clarify details. The IP notice may be refined to reflect the effective risk mitigation activities that you apply to your property.

9

The POST Manager supports the grower until they can self-manage the notice requirements

The Post Manager will continue to provide biosecurity education and support to you and your staff until you have the knowledge and skill to be able to meet the requirements of the IP notice unassisted.



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Compliance with the infested property notice

Once you can self-manage the biosecurity requirements of the IP notice, scheduled and unscheduled audits will be undertaken by Program compliance officers. Audits ensure you continue to comply with the notice requirements, for example maintaining restricted access to the property.

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The property remains to be an infested property until legislative change

The property continues to be subject to biosecurity risk irrespective of land use. The property also continues to be subject to biosecurity risk management for Panama TR4 while the disease is regulated by the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016*.

Program officers will continue to be available for support and guidance. A series of scheduled and unscheduled audits will continue to take place, and surveillance officers will perform routine surveillance to identify any new symptomatic plants if bananas continue to be grown. While the disease remains regulated, additional plants confirmed to have Panama TR4 must be destroyed and have a destruction zone established around them.

There are a range of precautionary measures you can take to manage the risk of spreading Panama TR4 within your property. It is up to you how you manage Panama TR4 on your property, however IP notice requirements must continue to be met.

Growers affected by Panama TR4 make a significant contribution to protect the wider banana industry from this devastating disease. If you feel you need support or help, please consider seeking it.

For further information or assistance, please contact the Panama TR4 Program on (07) 4091 8140 or email panamatr4@daf.qld.gov.au

