

What to do if you think you've seen an Emergency Plant Pest or Disease

EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY IN KEEPING TASMANIA FREE OF EMERGENCY PLANT PESTS

What is an emergency plant pest?

In short, it is a pest or disease of plants that we don't have here and that would be likely to cause serious consequences if it were to establish here.

At the national level, it is a pest or disease that is found overseas, but not in Australia. An example is fire blight.

At the Tasmanian level, it is one that may be present on the mainland but not here in Tasmania. An example is Queensland fruit fly.

It could also be a "novel" pest or disease. That is, one that has not been seen before but that looks likely to be a serious risk for our primary industries or natural environment.

An emergency plant pest is a quarantine concern and Quarantine Tasmania needs to be told of any sighting so they can investigate.

Why is it so important to report any sightings straightaway?

Many emergency plant pests and diseases are capable of spreading quickly. The sooner a suspect case is reported, the quicker Quarantine Tasmania can identify whether or not it is, indeed, an emergency plant pest or disease and therefore the better the chances of controlling and eradicating it. A delay in reporting a suspect case could result in the pest becoming established to the point where control and/or eradication is no longer feasible.

Where you might see an emergency plant pest

- In or on fruit or vegetables you have bought
- In or on plants you have bought
- On roadside plants or in bushland
- In a nursery or orchard
- In your garden or backyard
- In pasture or crops
- On or in packaging, luggage etc that has come from the mainland or overseas

What to do if you think you see what might be an emergency plant pest

Please do NOT take a sample of the affected plant or, in the case of an insect pest, please do NOT take a sample of the bug until you have spoken to a Quarantine Tasmania officer. That risks spreading the pest or disease. Instead, leave the affected plants alone and report what you have seen to the Emergency Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 (all hours).

The only exception to this is where you see a small quantity of hitchhiking pests in, for example, luggage or some kind of packaging or container, in which case you may be able to secure or contain them to prevent them spreading or escaping. If you do this, please do so without touching the pest or disease or doing anything that might spread it.

These are the types of information that will be helpful when you report. Don't worry if you don't have all the information, but the more the better:

- Where you saw it. A GPS location is ideal, otherwise just the best possible description of where you saw it.
- A photo of the suspect pest or disease and of any damage it might have already caused. If that isn't possible, a description of what it looks like and what kind of damage, if any, it appears to have caused.
- What plant or plants are affected. If you don't know the name, a photo or description of the affected plant/s would help.
- If it's on fruit, vegetables or plants that you have bought, the name and address of where you bought them from.
- The growing situation, ie on the roadside, in an orchard, at a nursery, bushland etc.
- The level of infestation, ie just one plant, several plants, whether the infestation appears to have spread far etc.
- Your contact details. If you wish to remain anonymous, that's fine. But if you provide your contact details, we can report back to you on what we find.

The precautions you should take

- Avoid or minimise touching or disturbing the affected plants.
- Clean and disinfect your hands and anything else that has been in contact with any affected plants.
- Clean any soil or plant material from your boots and outer clothing before you leave the site of the affected plants.

IF IN DOUBT, REPORT IT

If you see something unusual, please report it to us.

We do not expect you to be able to identify all the emergency plant pests ! We have entomologists, plant pathologists and plant virologists on staff to do that.

You will be doing your bit for Tasmanian biosecurity by alerting us to something you think might be an emergency plant pest.

We really do not mind receiving reports, made in good faith, that turn out to be endemic pests or diseases. Indeed, most reports to us are. But it is the report that turns out to be an emergency plant pest or disease that we need to ensure we get.

What happens when you report a suspect emergency plant pest

The first step is to assess what the suspect case might be. That is why the more information you can give us about a sighting the better. We may need to inspect the affected plant(s) ourselves to determine the species of pest or disease.

If an emergency plant pest or disease is confirmed, our first priority is to contain and eradicate it. However, if it has already spread extensively before we get the first report of it, eradication may not be feasible. That is why it is so important that you report anything you suspect might be an emergency plant pest or disease – and do so as promptly as you can.

For further information, please contact DPIPWE on 1300 368 550 or email biosecurity.planthealth@dPIPWE.tas.gov.au

THE EMERGENCY PLANT PEST HOTLINE IS 1800 084 881 (all hours)
If you work with plants or go bushwalking, it would be handy to have this number stored in your mobile phone

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