

Panama TR4 confirmed on fifth commercial banana farm

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1. What happens when Panama TR4 is confirmed on a property?

This can be a challenging time for the grower, as they adapt to the challenges of farming with Panama TR4. The grower will need to meet biosecurity requirements to limit disease spread and a dedicated Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) team will work with them to provide practical support.

With guidance from BQ, the grower destroys the infected plant and all other banana plants within a 10 metre radius. The area is covered with urea and plastic sheeting to contain the disease, and animal-proof fencing and signage restricts access.

BQ has undertaken surveillance to determine the extent of the disease on the property, and tracing investigations to identify potential disease risk pathways. No further samples have been taken from the property.

Over the coming months, the grower will transition to self-management of their biosecurity requirements. When the grower is managing the biosecurity requirements on their own, BQ will undertake compliance audits to ensure the requirements continue to be met.

2. Why does a grower have to meet these strict biosecurity requirements?

Biosecurity requirements placed on an infested property protect the banana industry by limiting the spread of Panama TR4. Growers on Panama TR4 infested farms work hard to meet those requirements to protect the wider industry.

BQ supports the grower to meet the requirements, and pre-existing on-farm measures also help.

Banana growers are also working hard to implement and maintain biosecurity measures across Far North Queensland. Strict requirements on infested properties support that industry-wide effort.

3. Can a grower farm with Panama TR4?

Growers can still produce bananas and trade with Panama TR4, provided they meet the biosecurity requirements. These requirements ensure no soil or plant material leaves the property.



Other farming options may be possible on Panama TR4 affected land. BQ can help assess suitability for growing other crops or grazing cattle, however biosecurity requirements will still apply.

4. How was this case found? How did it get on the property?

BQ officers found a symptomatic plant during routine surveillance in August.

It's not possible to determine exactly how the disease came to be on the property. BQ has been routinely checking the property for signs of the disease since 2015.

The fungus is easily spread and can survive undetected in soil for decades. Anything that moves soil and water can move the disease - people, vehicles, machinery, equipment and animals. Natural events like heavy rainfall and floods can also move the fungus.

5. The suspect case was identified in early August. Why has it taken until now to confirm it is Panama TR4?

Testing for Panama TR4 is a very complex process. A conclusive result can take up to six weeks from the time a sample is taken from a plant.

6. What does this detection mean for the banana industry?

It reinforces the need for growers to protect their properties at the farm gate. It is the best way to defend their farms from Panama TR4. Growers can restrict access to their properties by putting up signs and fences, keeping their gates shut, and managing movement of vehicles and people on and off the farm. Visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au for more information.

All growers need to check their plants regularly and report suspect plants to 13 25 23.

This latest detection reminds us to continue implementing strong on-farm biosecurity, regular surveillance and early destruction of infected plants. It is crucial that growers and community look out for Panama TR4 and report symptomatic plants to 13 25 23.

7. What can we all do to help protect our banana industry?

Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility. Community members should never enter a banana farm without permission because movement of people and machinery are the biggest risks of disease spread.