Your Levy At Work



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First Australian detections of pest and disease reinforce importance of nursery biosecurity

The first known Australian detections of two exotic pests and diseases in Queensland are reinforcing the critical role of Australia's nursery and plant industries in detecting and responding to biosecurity threats. It's also enforcing the impact of early detection, through levy-funded programs like Grow Help Australia's free diagnostic support.

Flower thrips (*Frankliniella intonsa*) has been detected at multiple commercial berry farms in the Caboolture area, while squash vein yellowing virus (*Ipomovirus cucurbitavenaflavi*) has been detected in watermelon and bitter melon samples in the Bundaberg region. Neither had previously been reported in Australia.

For nurseries, the detections are a timely reminder of the importance of vigilance across plant supply chains. Flower thrips has a broad host range that includes ornamental plants and can spread through infested plants and plant products, while infected host plants are considered a key pathway for squash vein yellowing virus.

Greenlife Industry Australia's (GIA) Manager RDE & Biosecurity, Celeste Cook, said the "These detections are a good reminder that biosecurity starts with people on the ground," Celeste said.

"The sooner potential issues are identified, the better the chance of limiting their impact on businesses, communities and Australia's plant industries."" Celeste said.

"Strong biosecurity practices and prompt reporting give governments and industry the information they need to understand a potential threat and determine the appropriate response.

""Everyone who works with plants has a role to play in keeping Australia's plant industries healthy and productive."."

New pest detected in Caboolture

The initial detection of *Frankliniella intonsa*, also known as flower thrips, occurred in early April 2026 following reports of unusually high thrips populations and significant damage to raspberry crops at a commercial berry farm in Elimbah.

Further detections have since been confirmed in blackberry and strawberry crops at commercial berry farms in Ningi and Wamuran.

The insect has a broad range of host plants, including ornamental plants, vegetables, field crops and fruit. It is small and difficult to see, with yellow-brown colouring and transparent wings.

Flower thrips can damage plants through feeding and egg-laying, causing symptoms including skin scarring, diminished fruit set and fruit distortion.

Biosecurity Queensland has undertaken surveillance and diagnostic testing to assess the extent and distribution of the insect. The Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests is considering the latest information to assess whether eradication is technically feasible and cost-beneficial.

Virus detected in Bundaberg

Squash vein yellowing virus was detected as part of a research project investigating a disease complex in melon in the Bundaberg region.

Follow-up sampling by Biosecurity Queensland identified the virus in two bitter melon samples collected in the region. Signs of distortion and yellowing of the fruit were also reported in watermelon crops, with symptoms observed in both immature and mature fruit and the vine.

However, the virus has not yet been confirmed as the cause of the observed symptoms or crop damage, as additional viruses were detected in the same samples.



The virus can be transmitted by whitefly, while spread through infected host plants is considered a key pathway. Infected fruit is considered a low-risk pathway.

Queensland is continuing initial tracing, diagnostic testing and targeted surveillance to better understand the distribution, prevalence and potential pathways of spread, including the role of alternative hosts and the whitefly vector.

The Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests has reviewed surveillance, diagnostic and technical information and reached consensus that eradication is not technically feasible and unlikely to be cost-beneficial

Practical steps growers can take

GIA is urging growers to maintain good on-farm biosecurity practices and regularly monitor crops for unusual pests, diseases or symptoms.

Growers should:

- continue to monitor crops for unusual thrips activity or crop damage.
- Take advantage of free, levy funded diagnostic support through Grow Help Australia.

Every production nursery is entitled to six free sample tests through Grow Help Australia's levy-funded program which has been extended until 2030 (*The Resourcing and diagnostic support for the nursery industry , NY9 1777 3««*
In addition to the six free tests, growers can access twelve samples at a 50% discount and two water tests to detect microorganisms. For growers, this means accurate diagnosis, healthier plants , time savings and more confidence.

""Biosecurity doesn't have to be complicated. It's about being aware, acting early and knowing who to contact if something seems out of place, Celeste said.

"If something unusual is identified, reporting it quickly helps build the information needed to understand the threat and determine the appropriate response."

What to do if you suspect an unusual pest or disease

Growers who suspect an unusual pest or disease should report it through the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 and contact Grow Help Australia for diagnostic support.

If you need help identifying the pest or disease, contact Grow Help Australia by:

- visiting the website
- emailing growhelp@dpi.qld.gov.au
- calling 07 3708 8377

Tailored grower information is also available through farmbiosecurity.com.au

The Resourcing and diagnostic support for the nursery industry , NY9 1777 3« is funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery levy and matched by the Australian Government[is a horticulture initiative designed to support nurseries in strengthening biosecurity and sustainable production practices–

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