

New suspect case of Panama disease tropical race 4

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Version: 1.0

About the property with the suspect new case

1. Where is the suspect new case? Is it close to previously infested properties?

The suspect Panama TR4 detection is on a commercial banana farm in the Tully Valley. The property is in close proximity to the four properties previously confirmed to have Panama TR4.

2. Has the grower been informed?

Yes. The grower has been advised of the preliminary positive result, as well as the associated biosecurity requirements they must now meet to minimise the risk of disease spread.

3. Will the grower be able to continue to trade?

The grower will need to meet set biosecurity requirements to continue to trade. A Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) team will work closely with the grower to support their needs in meeting the requirements. Existing good on-farm biosecurity measures will help the grower meet these requirements.

4. How did the disease get on to the property?

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.

From 'suspect' to 'conclusive'

5. How was the suspect case found?

BQ officers were carrying out routine surveillance on the property in August and identified one plant showing symptoms consistent with Panama TR4. A plant sample was then taken and securely sent for laboratory testing.

6. When will you have a conclusive result?

A reliable and conclusive diagnosis of Panama TR4 requires several tests. A positive preliminary 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.

7. What happens now?

BQ officers will begin high intensity surveillance to determine the extent of the disease on the suspect property. A small team will work closely with the grower to support their needs in meeting the biosecurity requirements.

8. What happens if the final test confirms Panama TR4 is present on the property?

BQ will advise the grower of the final conclusive test result. BQ will also notify the industry and the community of the result, but details of the property and owner will not be disclosed.

BQ will continue to work with the grower to meet the biosecurity requirements. This will include destruction of the infected plant, along with all plants within a 10 metre radius. The destruction area cannot be used for production purposes; however, the grower can continue to produce bananas in the remaining areas, subject to meeting biosecurity requirements.

9. This is the second detection this year. Will the disease continue to spread?

The disease will continue to spread, but strong on-farm biosecurity measures and regular surveillance can help to contain it. If confirmed, this will be the second detection of Panama TR4 in 2020.

Panama TR4 can survive undetected in soil for decades. The fungus is easily moved by people, vehicles, machinery, natural events and animals. Those factors can determine the rate of spread.

10. Will the Program be increasing surveillance to look for the disease?

Yes. The Panama TR4 Program Management Board recently approved recommendations to extend surveillance to include all Far North Queensland banana growing areas, with increased surveillance in the Tully Valley. The recommendations came from a joint industry-government working group that reviewed surveillance activities earlier this year.

The Board will continue to lead a joint industry-government effort to fight the disease, with a strong focus on surveillance, compliance, communication, and education.