

Surveillance is the best way to find Panama disease tropical race 4. Early detection helps contain the disease and protect the banana industry from wider spread. The banana industry is important to Queensland, which is why the Queensland Government invests in a surveillance program.

To ensure the Panama TR4 Program has the best chance of finding and controlling the disease early, the surveillance program was recently reviewed.

1. What's happening?

Surveillance frequency on commercial banana properties has been changed by the Panama TR4 Program, in consultation with the banana industry (see Question 5).

2. What is changing?

Since 2015, surveillance has been based on proximity to, and the number of links to, a banana property where the disease has been confirmed. This is the surveillance interval that was applied up until now:

Proximity and links	Surveillance
Panama TR4 infested property (IP)	Every six weeks
Strong links and/or within 2 km of IP	Every three months
Medium links and/or within 5 km of IP	Every six months
Minimal links and/or outside 5 km of IP	No surveillance

Now all commercial banana properties will get surveillance based on whether they:

- have had Panama TR4 detected
- are in the Tully Valley
- are situated between Cardwell to Lakeland.

IP and location	Surveillance
Panama TR4 infested property	Every eight weeks
Tully Valley	Every three months
All other commercial banana properties from Cardwell to Lakeland	Once in 12 months

3. Why is the Program changing who gets surveillance?

- It's been three years since all commercial banana properties have had surveillance. Checking all properties will confirm if the disease is contained to the Tully Valley.

- To make sure there is a cost-effective surveillance program that protects your property and the banana industry from Panama TR4.
- Increased surveillance in the Tully Valley will detect any localised spread of the disease and contain it early.
- The disease has not been detected on banana properties with strong and medium links as expected.

4. Is there any risk to changing surveillance on infested properties from six to eight weeks?

There is minimal risk. Eight weeks is considered enough time to detect the disease early and allow for quick destruction of infested plants.

5. How did the Program decide on these changes? Did industry have a say?

A working group of banana growers, the Australian Banana Growers' Council, Biosecurity Queensland, and Agri-Science Queensland was brought together to review the risk ratings/frequency and recommend changes to the Panama TR4 Program Management Board.

The Board, made up of equal government and industry representation, reviewed and approved these changes.

6. Why is surveillance necessary?

Surveillance will help detect the disease early. This means less buildup of fungal spores which reduces the ability for the spores to spread to the broader banana industry.

If we don't re-visit all banana properties, we can't confirm that the disease is only in the Tully Valley. We need to contain this disease for as long as possible. When the disease is not contained, it can spread rapidly as it has done overseas.

Finding plants with signs of the disease and testing these plants are the only way to know where Panama TR4 is. There is currently no practical way to test for Panama TR4 in soil or water.

To protect your farm, you need to check your banana plants regularly. All Queenslanders are required by law to report plants showing symptoms of Panama TR4 within 24 hours to 13 25 23. Ask us for the pocket-sized Panama TR4 identification guide.

7. Surveillance teams will now be going to all properties. How will the Program manage any chance of disease spread?

We take this matter seriously by ensuring our vehicles never enter banana production areas.

We also make sure that surveillance staff:

- follow strict decontamination and hygiene procedures
- use footwear supplied by the property or decontaminate their own footwear and other items when leaving each property
- adhere to all reasonable on-farm biosecurity measures
- fully decontaminate vehicles before going to another banana growing area.

8. When can I expect a surveillance team to come to my property, and what happens when they do?

We will contact you in the coming months to book in surveillance on your property, at a time that works for both of us. We will ask you about any reasonable biosecurity measures you would like us to follow.

On the day, the team leader will ask for consent to enter, explain the surveillance process, and follow your on-farm biosecurity measures.

The team will walk every fourth row of the entire banana production area, looking for banana plants with external symptoms of the disease.

For more information, look at the 'Surveillance for Panama TR4' fact sheet in your Panama TR4 Grower Kit, or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

9. What if you find a plant with Panama TR4 symptoms?

The plant will be examined for internal symptoms. If internal symptoms are found, a plant and corm sample will be taken and sent securely to the laboratory for testing. We will let you know if we do this.

The testing may take up to six weeks to get a conclusive result. We will inform you of the results.

For more information, look at the 'Diagnosing Panama TR4' fact sheet in your Panama TR4 Grower Kit, or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

10. What if I don't want surveillance on my property?

If you have concerns, let us know. We can work through any reasonable requests you have for surveillance to happen.

The Biosecurity Act 2014 does authorise the Program to determine the presence and extent of the disease in Queensland, so surveillance officers are authorised by law to enter properties to check for Panama TR4. This means we can enter without your consent, but we will always contact you first to seek consent.

11. What if I want more information?

You can contact Donna Campagnolo, Operations Manager, Panama TR4 Program on 0476 846 793 or email donna.campagnolo@daf.qld.gov.au, or contact Rosie Godwin, Research and Development Manager Australian Banana Growers' Council on 0407 746 469 or email rosie@abgc.org.au.