

Reporting plant pests in the WA Grains industry.

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Key Messages

- Emergency Plant Pests are those that would cause serious disruption to Australia's grains industry.
- What is the Emergency Plant Pest Response DEED (EPPRD). What does it do? How can growers be compensated.
- Pest reporting needs to be done as soon as possible.
- There are a number of tools to help in the reporting of pests in grain crops.

Aims

The Grains Farm Biosecurity Project aims to raise the awareness of key biosecurity issues in the Australian Grains industry. This is being done through developing and distributing biosecurity awareness material, promoting effective biosecurity practices and communications with all stakeholders of the grains supply chain.

What is an emergency plant pest?

The term '*pest*' refers to all insects, mites, snails, nematodes, pathogens (diseases) and weeds that may harm plants, plant products or bees. Currently weeds are not formally included in the response DEED but steps are being made to include them.

Exotic pests are those not currently present in Australia, while established (or endemic) pests are those present within Australia. **Emergency Plant Pests** (EPPs) are serious exotic pests.

At the state level there are some pests that occur in the eastern states that do not occur here in WA. These we refer to as **Regional** pests. Regional pests are covered under the "GrainGuard" plan.

An EPP is a pest that would cause serious disruption to Australia's plant industries, of which the grains industry is the largest, and the national economy if it became established. It may also adversely affect animal industries and/or the environment, and cause possible social dislocation.

To meet the EPP criteria, the pest must also be one of the following:

- ❖ A new pest to Australia
- ❖ A different variation or strain of a pest established in Australia
- ❖ A previously unknown pest, or
- ❖ A pest that occurs in Australia but is 'actively' confined or contained.

In a similar vein a Regional pest could do the same but this applies to the WA grain industry only.

What is the DEED.

The EPPRD is an agreement between the Australian and state/territory governments, as well as the plant industries that have signed up to it. The grains industry is represented by Grain Producers Australia (GPA) in the EPPRD. The purpose of this agreement is to ensure rapid and efficient responses to EPP Incidents.

The EPPRD is a world-first cost sharing agreement for plant pest emergency responses between governments and industries, and it establishes basic operating principles and guidelines as well as defining roles and responsibilities. It is a legally binding document that includes mechanisms for formal government/industry consultation on resource allocation, funding, training and risk management in the response to an EPP Incident.

More information on the EPPRD and the current version of the document can be downloaded from the PHA website (www.phau.com.au).

Why report suspect pests?

In addition to increasing the likelihood of eradicating the pest from Australia or just from within WA, reporting suspect EPP and Regional pests as soon as possible may prevent or minimise long-term damage to, or the quarantine period of, properties and the entire grain industry.

Also, if eradication of the EPP is undertaken under the Emergency Plant Pest Response DEED (EPPRD), growers may be eligible for reimbursements for direct losses of crops, produce or capital items required to be destroyed by an approved Response Plan. These are covered by **Owner Reimbursement Costs** (ORCs), which are built into the EPPRD to minimise the negative financial impacts of an EPP eradication response.

If an EPP is not reported, and therefore an eradication response under the EPPRD is not implemented, growers **will not** be eligible for Owner Reimbursement Costs.

More information on ORCs can be found on the PHA website (www.phau.com.au).

Currently with regard to regional pests there is no matching process at the state level. The EPPRD does not apply to Regional pests.

Reporting obligations

Following the detection of a suspect EPP, most Australians not only have a moral obligation to report it, but also a legal obligation.

All signatories to the EPPRD have an obligation to report suspect EPPs and to take reasonable actions to encourage their own members to report them. In addition, all employees of government signatories (i.e. Commonwealth and all state/territory governments) must also report suspect EPPs, otherwise their organisations are at risk of breaching the terms of the EPPRD and may be severely penalised.

On top of the obligations under the EPPRD, most states/territories have legislation in place that requires all members of the public to report notifiable and/or exotic plant pests (which covers suspect EPPs).

If these obligations are not enough, all Australians should report suspect EPPs to ensure that there is the smallest possible impact on Australia's valuable plant production industries.

When to report

The earlier a new pest is reported, there is a better chance of a successful eradication response being mounted. Delays in reporting allow the pest to become better established and potentially spread further, meaning that eradication becomes more difficult or impossible.

Therefore, reporting should occur as soon as an EPP is suspected. Reporting at this early stage allows interim measures to be put in place while confirmatory diagnostic analysis is being carried out. Do not wait to report just because you are not 100% certain of the identity of the pest. It goes without saying that a delay in reporting a confirmed or suspected EPP until the publication of a scientific journal article is unacceptable.

Under the EPPRD, reporting should occur when there is a "reasonably held suspicion of an EPP".

The key action to take once you suspect that you have detected an EPP is to report it.

The EPPRD provides a guiding principle that no one person or organisation is made better or worse off as a result of reporting an Incident or suspected Incident.

By reporting the suspect EPP, you are allowing the response to get underway to most effectively deal with the pest. Immediate reporting also ensures that long term impacts of the pest are not due to your lack of action.

The end recipient of a suspect EPP report is the Chief Plant Health Manager (CPHM) in your state or territory, who will then inform the Australian Government.

To ensure your report will reach the CPHM, use one of the mechanisms below to report the suspect EPP:

- ❖ Call The Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881)
- ❖ Directly contact the state/territory department of agriculture or primary industries
- ❖ Use the MyPestGuide Reporter app or MyPestGuide online reporting tool to send an image of the pest to the Department of Agriculture and Food, WA. See the MyPestGuide [webpage](#) for more information about these tools.
- ❖ If you are a state/territory department of agriculture or primary industries employee, inform your direct supervisor or General Manager

Information to include

When reporting, it is helpful if you can provide some basic information to help determine the most appropriate course of action. You do not need to have all the information listed below, but the more information included the more it will assist the response.

The type of information from the site of detection that might be useful to include:

- The pest that is suspected to be present
- A detailed description of the pest itself, the symptoms present and/or the damage to the plant
- Photographs of the pest, symptoms, growing situation, etc.
- The level of pest infestation/infection (e.g. percentage of plants affected, total number or area of plants affected)
- Distribution of the pest (i.e. is it scattered, found in groups, or isolated to one patch)
- Details of the host plant, including:
 - Common name
 - Scientific name
 - Variety
 - Age
 - Developmental stage
- Details of the growing situation (e.g. orchard, broadacre, home garden, etc.)
- Any equipment or product movement that has occurred or is about to occur into or out of the affected area
 - Access details, such as:
 - Property owner details
 - Directions on how to access the site
 - Location of the plant(s) on the property (maps or GPS coordinates)
- Any other relevant information

Key actions and precautions

If you have found a suspect EPP, there are a couple of general precautions that should be taken in addition to reporting the pest that will help contain the pest and protect other parts of the property and adjoining properties.

If the pest was detected in a laboratory, ensure that it is appropriately contained and that you decontaminate yourself, your clothing and any equipment that you were using before leaving the laboratory.

If the pest was detected in the field or within a controlled environment facility (e.g. glasshouse), take the following appropriate biosecurity precautions:

- ❖ Do not touch or disturb affected plants
- ❖ Mark the location of the pest detection with signage or tape
- ❖ Limit access to the area for both people and equipment
- ❖ Decontaminate yourself by washing hands, clothes, boots and other equipment that may have been in contact with affected plant material or soil and cannot be left behind
- ❖ Restrict operations in the area, or ask the property owner to restrict access
- ❖ Avoid coming in contact with potential host plants or visiting other properties until you have decontaminated yourself

Key words

Grain Biosecurity, EPRRD, plant pest reporting

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References:

PHA (2015). Industry Biosecurity Plan for the Grains Industry. Version 3.0, July 2015.



If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

