

# National Citrus Canker Eradication Program

## Industry update

*Good news as Australia moves towards citrus canker free status*

### National Citrus Canker Response Plan version 5.0 approved

In November, the National Management Group (NMG) approved version 5.0 of the National Citrus Canker Response Plan and associated cost-share budget. The NMG comprises representatives of the Australian, State and Territory governments, Citrus Australia, and Nursery and Garden Industry Australia.

With no new detections of citrus canker since June 2019, the response is moving towards the final phases of eradication.

The Response Plan details key activities to achieve Australia's declaration of freedom from citrus canker disease by the end of 2020, namely:

- ongoing surveillance and monitoring of properties and trace plants to check for the absence of disease
- continued engagement with residents, businesses and industry
- ongoing containment and eradication activities to identify and remove infected plants
- reinstatement of state and area freedoms from citrus canker. based on evidence the disease is absent
- monitoring the technical and financial feasibility of the eradication program
- removing restrictions on the movement of citrus canker host materials within the NT and across State and Territory

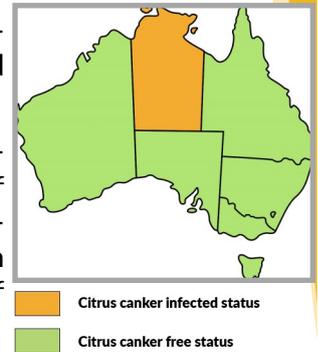


The Response Plan supports phased removal of movement, quarantine and cultivation restrictions and proof of freedom in 2020.

### Other States and Territories confirmed free of citrus canker

The NMG approved declaration of freedom for all states and territories except NT in November. Western Australia (WA) was declared free of citrus canker, 18 months after the initial detection of the disease in the state. Quarantine restrictions were removed for Kununurra and Wyndham on 22 November, allowing free movement of citrus plants and fruit in WA.

The WA response involved surveillance of more than 13,000 properties across northern WA and removal of 1,520 citrus plants.



### Katherine restricted area removed

The restricted area in Katherine, Northern Territory (NT), was lifted on 20 November, with affected residents now able to replant citrus on their properties.

All citrus canker host plants were removed from the restricted area in late 2018. The program is required to enforce a 'host free period', or a minimum period of time in which citrus canker host plants cannot be reintroduced. This period has now passed, allowing the Katherine restricted area to be removed.

The NT's restrictions on moving citrus fruit and juice from the control areas into a restricted area were also lifted on 20 November, allowing citrus producers from the control areas to sell their citrus fruit and juice in restricted areas if the produce is for human consumption.



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### Plant removals and regrowth surveillance in restricted areas

Following the removal of the Katherine restricted area this month, there are now 12 restricted areas in the NT. These are all located in the greater Darwin region.

There are still restrictions on cultivating and moving citrus canker host plants in these restricted areas, and no citrus canker host plants may be present. This helps support claims for proof of freedom through compliance with host free period requirements.

Plant removal and regrowth surveillance activities in restricted areas in the NT in the past quarter have included:

- Removing over 1,000 citrus canker host plants from the CSIRO site, located in the Karama restricted area. Removal work took two weeks to complete.
- Completing the second round of regrowth surveillance at Charles Darwin University's Casuarina campus. Certificate III Horticulture students supported the plant health officers in locating the regrowth, and observed the removal activities. Students also used the opportunity to ask questions about the citrus plant removal, surveillance work and general biosecurity practices and requirements.

### Diagnostics

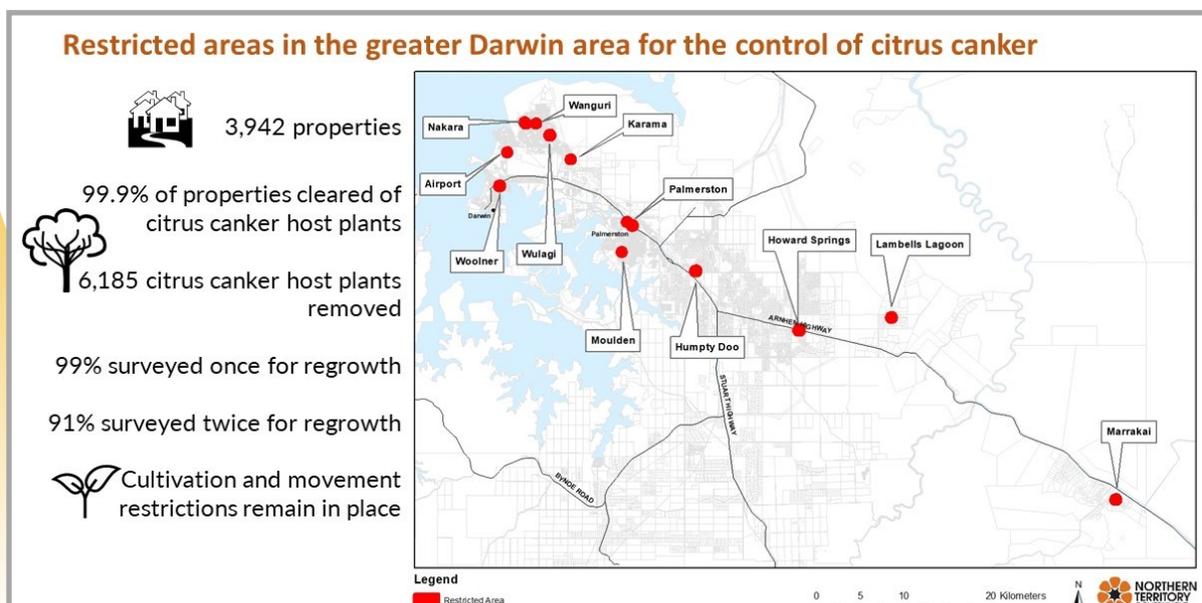
Between August and mid-November, 29 samples of plant material were received by the Berrimah Farm laboratory to test for citrus canker. All samples tested negative for the disease.



Laboratory observations and testing for citrus canker.



Certificate III Horticulture students at Charles Darwin University (Nakara restricted area) joined plant health officers to check for regrowth on the Casuarina campus. All regrowth was removed and there were no symptoms of citrus canker present.



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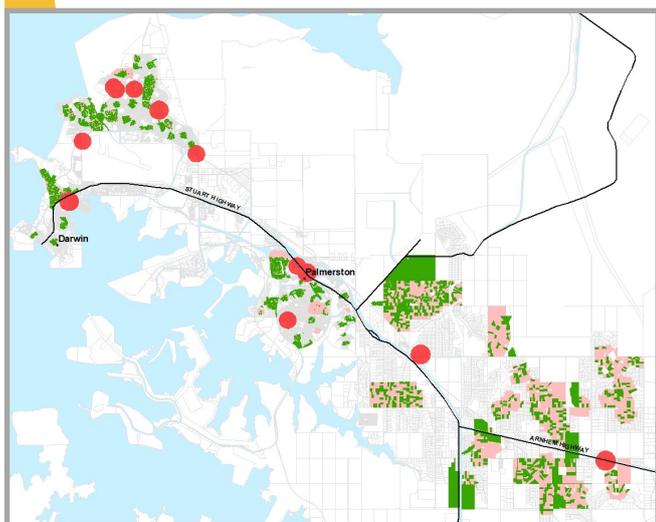
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### Surveillance in areas of interest and remote communities

Areas of interest (AOIs) in the greater Darwin and Katherine areas have been identified for locating high priority trace plants from the original source of citrus canker (refer to the map below). Areas are identified based on their proximity to nurseries that distributed trace plants, newer residential areas and areas where trace plants have been found.

By mid-November, 5,760 plants were checked at 4,058 AOI properties and 487 trace plants were identified for ongoing surveillance.

A number of citrus plants originating from the infection source property were traced to remote NT communities. Plant health officers have visited these remote communities to locate and check the health of trace plants and other citrus canker host plants, including properties in Gunbalanya, Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, Gapuwiyak, Borroloola, Wadeye, Nganmariyana (Palumpa), Emu Point and Peppimenarti. Plant samples were taken from some of the communities for testing. Citrus canker disease was not confirmed in any of the samples.



- Legend**
- Surveyed
  - AOI Cases
  - Restricted Area

Over 5,760 citrus plants have been checked in areas of interest across the greater Darwin and Katherine areas.

### Compliance action

The *NT Plant Health Act 2008* gives authorised plant health inspectors the power to survey properties and remove plants and plant related materials for the control of plant diseases.

Host plant removals have been undertaken with the focus on encouraging voluntary access to properties. However when a resident or business ignores or refuses requests from plant health inspectors to check their property and/or remove citrus canker host plants, an approved process to formally enter properties can be used.

Since plant removals started in the NT in June 2018, there have only been 235 cases (3%), which required this approach and of those:

- 194 resolved through negotiation
- 11 resolved after formal letters were sent
- 30 properties (0.4%) required forced entry .

### Tracing activities

Approximately 2,800 direct trace plants from the original source of the disease are known to have been distributed across the NT.

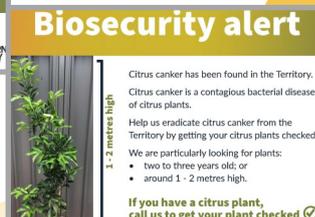
To date in the NT, 1,457 trace plants have been traced to their end point. Of the located trace plants:

- 521 plants have been removed from restricted areas
- 938 plants remain under surveillance outside of the restricted areas.

Trace plants continue to be located through surveillance and communications activities.



Messaging aimed at locating and checking the health of trace plants.



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### Trade, treatment and movement protocols

Interstate trade restrictions of citrus fruit and kaffir lime leaves are still in place for growers within quarantine control areas in the NT.

Commercial growers in control areas can move their produce out of the control area and trade interstate if they obtain a permit (<https://dpir.nt.gov.au/citruscanker/application-for-permit>) and:

- are accredited as free from citrus canker disease
- are registered as a grower and/or pack house
- follow the responsibilities, requirements, procedures and actions in the relevant operating procedure

For further details on the accreditation and registration processes and to get a copy of the operating procedures, email: [quarantine@nt.gov.au](mailto:quarantine@nt.gov.au).

To keep market access open for growers to NSW and Victorian markets, weekly and bi-weekly inspections of kaffir lime leaves are being undertaken on four commercial properties in the NT.

### Sentinel plants

A controlled reintroduction of citrus canker host plants into restricted areas is planned for early 2020, with sentinel plants being distributed for regular surveillance across the infected premises (IPs) in the Darwin region.

The introduction of sentinel plants supports international requirements for proof of freedom from the disease and contributes to the evidence of absence of citrus canker in the NT.

There are already six properties with permits for sentinel plants, five in Darwin and one in Katherine. A further 10 properties (IPs) will receive sentinel plants in January 2020. These will be monitored monthly until eradication is declared.



Sentinel property signage

### Industry and community engagement

This last quarter has seen the communications team busy with regular engagement with residents, businesses and stakeholders through:

- pop-up information booths at shopping centres and key events, including the annual Darwin Botanic Gardens plant sale and Top End Native Plant Society sale
- information sessions for the citrus industry, (in Darwin and Katherine) in September, with presentations on upcoming surveillance activities, the sentinel plants and proof of freedom
- an awareness and education program for school-aged students in the greater Darwin area. Engaged with over 600 students from seven rural and urban schools during Science Week 2019
- presentation to 20 Certificate III Horticulture students at Charles Darwin University
- feature articles in the DPIR Top Paddock newsletter, NT Farmers' newsletter and on the NT News website
- radio advertisements in Greek, Yolgnu Matha and Kriol languages
- participation in the PIEFA (Primary Industry Education Foundation Australia) and NT Farmers "Food fibre and foliage education roadshow", exploring ways for teachers to bring primary industry education into their classes.



Industry and community engagement activities provide opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions and receive program updates.

