INDUSTRY RESOURCE TOOLKIT SERIES: MOVEMENT RESTRICTION DURING A RESPONSE

This content has been developed in collaboration with Plant Health Australia to increase awareness of national response arrangements under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD).

Movement restriction during a response

In this article, you will learn about movement restrictions, including:

- what movement restrictions are and when they are implemented
- the decision-making process to implement movement restrictions
- what you can do now to support a quick return to business as usual.

Key points

- Movement restrictions are implemented to restrict the movement of potential hosts and carriers of pests and diseases during a biosecurity response.
- The scale and spread of movement restrictions will vary depending on the risk associated with the Emergency Plant Pest (EPP).
- Movement restrictions help stop the further spread of the EPP while systems and treatment processes are implemented to facilitate the controlled movement of commodities, which protects trade with intrastate, interstate, and international markets.
- There are many things you can do now to prepare for potential movement restrictions and reduce the impacts on your business.

What are movement restrictions?

Movement restrictions (also referred to as movement conditions) are regulatory measures put in place to prevent the further spread of plant pests and diseases, including Emergency Plant Pests (EPP). When an EPP is detected one of the first actions the lead agency may take is to implement quarantine zones that restrict the movement of potential hosts and carriers of the pest or disease. Limiting the movement of EPP plant hosts and carriers reduces the risk of further spread and increases the opportunity for eradication.

During the early phase of an EPP response, movement restrictions allow the lead agency time to determine the extent of an incursion. Understanding how far the EPP has already spread is critical to figuring out if eradication is possible and what the most effective method(s) to achieve eradication are.

Movement restrictions can be placed on plants, plant products (harvested crops), crop residues, equipment, and vehicles. Anything that is determined to be capable of carrying an EPP may be subject to movement restrictions, the specific items/product will vary depending on the EPP. Some EPPs will only be found on part(s) of the host plant or plant products (e.g. Panama disease in bananas can be carried in plant leaves, roots, and stems, but not in the fruit). It is not just plants and plant products that can be subject to movement restrictions, soil-borne pests (e.g. grapevine phylloxera) can be moved on farming equipment, machinery, people and domestic vehicles.

Depending on the biology (how it spreads, how fast it reproduces), location (proximity to commercial crops) and impact of the EPP, movement restrictions can be applied to individual properties, local production areas, and/or whole production regions. Movement restrictions can vary in scale and severity depending on the risk associated with the EPP. The detection of an EPP can also have trade impacts for whole states/territories and/or all of Australia depending on the rules set by trade partners (states/territories or countries). For example, if a disease is found in an isolated area with little commercial or domestic production of a host crop, then movement restrictions may be limited to the immediate growing region within the affected state or territory. Alternatively, if a pest had limited flying ability but was found over several commercial growing regions during peak production of host crops, then movement restrictions may be more widespread and impact interstate and international movements.

The key short-term goal of movement restrictions is to stop further spread of the EPP while the lead agency determines the current distribution of the EPP and assesses if eradication is possible. In the longer term, movement restrictions allow systems and treatment processes to be implemented that facilitate the controlled movement of commodities, which protects trade with intrastate, interstate, and international markets.

Who decides what the movement restrictions will be?

Movement restrictions that relate to an EPP response are developed by the lead agency and are usually implemented as part of the incident definition phase of a response.

When an EPP that impacts the Lychee industry is detected, the Australian Lychee Growers Association (ALGA) works collaboratively with the lead agency, other state and territory governments and pest and disease experts to assess the potential pathways for further spread and determine effective containment measures. This engagement is done through ALGA representation on the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) and if a response plan is enacted, the Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) role in the Incident Management Team (IMT). This engagement ensures that effective and proportionate response actions are applied to achieve response outcomes.

The lead agency will be responsible for implementing movement restrictions within their state or territory. When interstate movement restrictions are put in place by a lead agency, they must notify the CCEPP secretariat as soon as possible for circulation to all affected parties.

Other states and territories may also implement movement restrictions of their own to help prevent the EPP from crossing borders.

When will the movement of produce be stopped?

Throughout a response, the situation is constantly changing. During the early stages as information is being gathered and the extent of the incident is unknown, movement restrictions can include a complete standstill of all items capable of carrying the EPP (e.g. plant material, produce, equipment). As the response continues, the development of treatment options and gathered surveillance data can support the establishment of pest free areas, which can enable growers to move their commodities. Initially, the movement of commodities often relies on the use of treatment protocols and the issuing of plant health certificates.

For some EPPs eradication is not possible, but in situations where containment is possible, ongoing movement restrictions may be put in place to stop the spread to other parts of the state or territory or other parts of the country. Examples of this are the current restrictions on the movement of banana plants from northern Queensland into the southern part of the state or interstate and the movement of honey and honey products into Western Australia or Tasmania from other mainland states and territories.

What can a grower do to return to business more quickly?

There are many things you can do to prepare for potential movement restrictions and reduce the impacts on your business.

Implementing an on-farm biosecurity plan

By building quick and simple measures into your everyday work practices, you can improve your defences against pests and diseases. A biosecurity plan identifies biosecurity practices relevant to your property and outlines how they should be implemented. These can include basics such as:

1. zoning your farm to create separate production areas, so that if one crop or area is affected, other areas can operate independently
2. monitoring and recording people, vehicles and equipment that come and go from your property
3. sourcing seed, seedlings and root stock from suppliers with strong biosecurity practices
4. regularly monitoring the quality of your water supply
5. ensuring staff and visitors understand and follow your biosecurity plan and provide training if needed
6. implementing pest management practices to control pests, weeds and feral animals.

Records of these day-to-day activities can be used to support your ability to return to business during a response.

Build networks

Establish strong relationships with industry bodies, other growers, and biosecurity professionals to share information and support. Maintaining open communication allows you to support preparedness activities but also provide key information during an incursion to support and speed up the response activities.

Follow biosecurity protocols

It only takes one person to not follow protocols for an incursion to spread beyond the restricted area. This can extend the duration of a response leading to further restrictions and possibly making it unfeasible to eradicate the EPP.

Stay informed

Timely and effective communication is vital to a successful response and ALGA will support affected growers, stakeholders and the wider community to stay updated on response activities. Your role is to ensure you regularly check for updates from trusted sources like the Australian Lychee Growers Association and biosecurity authorities about pest threats and movement restrictions.

Educate your workforce

Ensure that all employees are trained in biosecurity protocols and understand their role in preventing pest and disease (including EPPs) spread, monitoring for unwanted pests or diseases and reporting.

What is your industry doing to support a quick return to business as usual?

ALGA works with governments, growers and researchers before, during and after a response to support a swift recovery. This includes:

- supporting research into pest entry pathways, pest-resistant varieties, and pest control options and methods
- implementing national monitoring and surveillance programs
- participating in simulation exercises to test existing biosecurity systems and processes and supporting recommendations for improvement
- providing training and resources to affected growers
- developing a national biosecurity plan for the industry
- supplying information to develop an onfarm biosecurity plan
- assist growers to develop an onfarm biosecurity plan

ALGA also plays a crucial role in advocating for policy changes that facilitate recovery and in coordinating efforts across the supply chain to maintain market stability. Through these actions, ALGA aims to minimise disruption and support growers in resuming normal operations as quickly as possible.

ALGA will communicate all necessary & relevant Biosecurity information to growers via email, social media and industry newsletters.

Resources

Read: Want to learn more?

- Farm biosecurity: numerous resources to support your development and implementation of on-farm biosecurity measures including a toolkit with a gate sign, biosecurity planning, record templates and how to create a biosecurity kit.
- Crop specific resources provide further information including biosecurity checklists, biosecurity manuals and pest surveillance sheets ALGA website-PHA Resource Toolkit
- Australian interstate quarantine: stay up to date with current quarantine requirements when moving plants and plant products within Australia.

Learn: Free training available on BOLT

Free training is available on Biosecurity Online Training platform (BOLT). Register your account to get started.

- Growers Guide to Pest Reporting and Responding

For more information refer to:

Article 1 National biosecurity system
Article 2 What happens when you report something unusual
Article 3 Responding to a plant, pest under the EPPRD
Article 4 Communication during a response
Article 5 Owner reimbursement costs