

Future management of Banana Freckle

What has changed

Banana plant-related material (excluding fruit) must now be sold under a free Permit system to ensure they are sourced from properties accredited as being free of Banana Freckle.

To clarify interstate biosecurity requirements, it is now illegal to move banana plant-related material (excluding fruit) out of the Northern Territory (NT) without a permit.

When do I need a permit?

Anyone who is selling banana plant-related material, including banana plants, sets or suckers, and banana tissue cultures, needs a permit. This includes anyone operating a nursery or selling plants at markets.

Do I need a permit to sell banana fruit?

There are no restrictions on selling or moving banana fruit within the NT. However, fruit must not be moved outside the NT unless it meets the import requirements of the receiving state or territory.

Do I need a permit to give plants away?

You do not need a permit to give banana plants away. Permits are only needed for commercial trade, when banana plants are sold or change hands in commercial setting such as markets, nurseries or shows.

However, this does not mean you have no obligation to manage Banana Freckle and prevent its spread. Spreading Banana Freckle may result in severe penalties under the *NT Plant Health Act 2008*. You must seek guidance from Plant Biosecurity¹ on how to manage Banana Freckle if you suspect it is present.

Why do we need this change?

The NT is moving to the next phase of managing Banana Freckle, which will focus on safeguarding Australia's banana industry by improving our resilience and ability to manage any future disease outbreaks.

Permits are now required for the commercial trade of banana plant-related material. Individual banana plants do not need to be accompanied by a permit, and no movement permit is required. NT sellers must be able to provide proof of purchase in the form of a written invoice or receipt if requested by buyers.

The free permits require individuals and businesses selling banana plants to source their plants from properties accredited as being free of Banana Freckle. If you are growing or holding banana plants for sale, this means you will need to have your property inspected and declared free of Banana Freckle by NT Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to be eligible for a permit to trade.

¹ Contact Plant Biosecurity on (08) 8999 2118 or plantbiosecurity@nt.gov.au

New requirements for the next phase of managing banana freckle

Permit holders also have responsibilities to prevent the movement of banana plant-related material (excluding fruit) onto any property that has been accredited as free of Banana Freckle. This will protect properties that are free of Banana Freckle.

Interstate trade requirements are complex. The new regulation makes everyone's responsibilities clearer by explicitly requiring a permit to move banana plant-related material (excluding fruit) outside the NT. Fruit taken out of the NT must still meet all requirements of the receiving State or Territory, including visitors buying fruit from Markets or other retailers in the NT.

For primary producers

The new requirements aim to protect the banana industry while minimising impact on your business. Permit requirements align with industry biosecurity initiatives, including opportunities to develop biosecurity plans to stop pests and diseases like Banana Freckle moving into production areas. The new requirements will better protect your business from biosecurity risks like Banana Freckle, and other pests and diseases.

About Banana Freckle in the NT

Banana Freckle is a serious disease of bananas that creates rough, dark lesions like sandpaper on the surfaces of banana plants, including fruit. These symptoms can reduce fruit yield and make fruit unmarketable, even though it remains safe to eat.

The NT is now in the next phase of managing Banana Freckle. Hard work by the NT's community has eliminated Banana Freckle from rural and remote properties. This does not mean the response is over, or that eradication is not possible in the future. In moving to the next phase, these new measures aim to contain Banana Freckle while protecting Australia's banana industry and minimising impact on the community.

What should I do?

If you're selling banana plants (including offsets/suckers/sets and tissue culture), it is important that you contact Plant Biosecurity² to find out what you need to do to become accredited as a pest free place of production and obtain permits to sell banana plants and help protect Australia against Banana Freckle.

If your plants have Banana Freckle, you will have to comply with existing requirements under the NT *Plant Health Act 2008* to manage the disease and prevent its spread. Contact Plant Biosecurity for guidance on how to meet your obligations in a responsible manner.

If you're travelling interstate, make sure you don't move banana plants out of the NT unless you have been issued a permit that meets the requirements of the state or territory where the plants are being taken.

² Contact Plant Biosecurity on (08) 8999 2118 or plantbiosecurity@nt.gov.au