

## Bacterial wilt

### What is it?

Bacterial wilt is a wilt disease that first appeared in eastern Africa in 2001. *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *musacearum* is the bacterial pathogen responsible for the disease.

The disease was first reported on ensete (Ethiopian/false banana), but has now spread to bananas. Many banana varieties appear to be susceptible.

Plants may be affected at any growth stage, including full maturity. The effects of the disease are severe. Death of the whole plant usually occurs within one month of the first symptoms appearing. No cases have yet been recorded in Australia.

### What to look for?

In bananas, one of the first symptoms is discolouration at the flower tip, and withering of the flower bracts. Other symptoms include yellowing and wilting of the leaves, and premature ripening of fruit in young plants.

When infected fruit is cut, a pink-purple discolouration is found. This discolouration is the most reliable symptom, often occurring even when other symptoms fail to appear.

### How does it spread?

The disease can be spread via movement of infected plant material, contaminated farming and processing tools, and humans and animals.

Insects and/or wind may also spread the disease and wind-borne rain droplets may carry bacterial ooze from plant to plant, speeding the spread of the disease.

#### Want more info?

If you would like more information, or to download a copy of the Industry Biosecurity Plan, visit [www.planthealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au), email [admin@phau.com.au](mailto:admin@phau.com.au) or phone (02) 6215 7700.

## Where it is found?

The disease is widespread in Ethiopia, and in 2001 was also reported in the major banana growing districts of central Uganda.

Spread is likely to be rapid in Uganda and other areas of eastern Africa.

## Control options

Ultimately, the best option for Australia is prevention via the maintenance of effective quarantine.

However, maintaining good plantation biosecurity, for example, the use of disease-free planting material, cleaning equipment contaminated with diseased material, crop rotation, and destruction or movement restrictions of diseased plants will also help provide a greater level of protection against this disease. Timely reporting of suspicious wilt signs, and plantation surveillance and monitoring activities are also highly important practices.

Efforts to eliminate the disease in Africa have failed. In Uganda, affected plantations have been burned, but new outbreaks continue to occur.

Biosecurity practices (as outlined above) will help ensure protection against this, and other serious threats to the banana industry.

## Reporting

Any unusual plant pest should be reported immediately to the relevant state/territory agriculture agency through the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881). To minimise the risk of disease spread, samples should not be moved until they have been checked by an expert.

This fact sheet was produced as part of the Industry Biosecurity Plan for the Banana Industry.

EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE  
**1800 084 881**

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