

Bunchy top disease

What causes bunchy top?

Bunchy top is the most devastating viral disease of bananas world-wide. Caused by banana bunchy top virus (BBTV), this disease is characterised by the 'bunched' appearance of newly emerging leaves and dot-dash flecking of leaves and stem sheaths. Affected plants do not produce fruit, resulting in significant loss of production on commercial farms.

BBTV is a regulated banana pest under active quarantine control in Australia.

What does it look like?

- Dark green dot-dash flecks along veins of leaves, most visible on the underside at the base of the leaf adjacent to the midrib.
- Flecks in veins which can form characteristic 'hooks' into the midrib from the leaf blade (also seen on the petioles and in the leaf sheaths of stems).
- Reduced growth with emerging leaves becoming choked and 'bunched'.
- Affected leaves appearing more upright with pale yellow margins, often having wavy leaf margins.
- If infected at an early stage, plants become very stunted and rarely produce bunches.
- If infected at a later stage, distorted bunches may be produced.



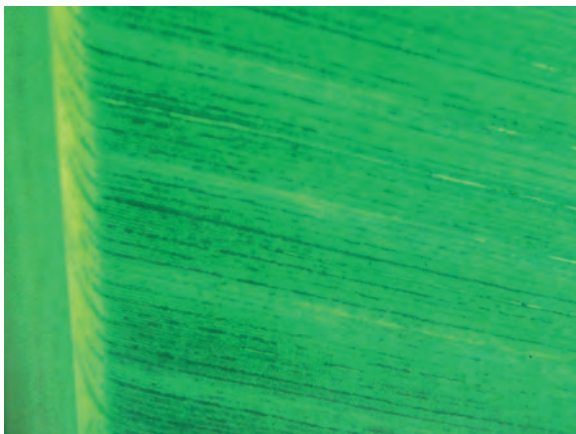
Jeff Daniells

Affected leaves are more upright with pale yellow margins. Leaf margins may also be more wavy than normal



Jeff Daniells

Typical bunching of emerging leaves



John Thomas

Vein-flecking can be seen on the petioles and in the lamina of some leaves

How is it spread?

BBTV is spread in infected planting material, or by the banana aphid (*Pentalonia nigronervosa*). Aphids can retain the virus for several weeks and may cover large distances especially when blown by the wind. Plants can also be infected without showing symptoms.

Where is it now?

Bunchy top is currently present in the south east Queensland and northern New South Wales production areas. North Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory production areas remain free of the pest.

How is it controlled?

Control can only be achieved through the destruction of affected plants. Control depends on prompt detection and destruction of infected stools. There are strict quarantine restrictions to prevent movement of contaminated planting material. Control also depends on the use of planting material free of the virus and intensive eradication schemes.

Key strategies for bunchy top control are:

- Regular inspection of crops and prompt removal of plants with symptoms.
- Use of tissue-cultured, pest-free planting material.
- QBAN tissue culture plants are tested for BBTV to provide industry with a source of quality virus-free plants.

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

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881**

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