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Panama Disease in Bananas

Your banana plant suddenly goes yellow and begins to wilt.

Panama disease could be killing your plants.
What do you need to do?

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PLEASE:

- ◀ **DO NOT CUT IT DOWN.**
- ◀ **DO NOT TRY TO DIG IT UP AND CART IT AWAY.**
- ◀ **BOTH THESE THINGS WILL SPREAD PANAMA DISEASE AND MAKE IT WORSE.**
- ◀ **PLEASE CONTACT DPIFM FOR ASSISTANCE, phone 8999 2357 - someone will contact you and come out to identify the cause and assist you in taking the best course of action.**

If it is Panama Disease:

- ◀ It is capable of killing all banana varieties currently grown in the Northern Territory.
- ◀ It lives in the soil and enters the plant via its roots.
- ◀ The plant wilts and dies.
- ◀ There is no known cure.
- ◀ You will have to take very special measures to destroy the plants and ensure the disease does not spread. Trained DPIFM Staff will assist you with this. Bananas planted back into diseased sites will die.

You could be lucky:

- ◀ There are other things that can look similar to Fusarium Wilt but are a lot less serious and your plants could be saved.
- ◀ Contact DPIFM on 8999 2357 for help and advice. An expert can quickly determine the cause of a problem and assist you with control.

Current Situation with Panama Disease (Tropical Race 4) in the NT:

- ◀ The disease is common in Indonesia and Malaysia.
- ◀ The disease was first discovered on a property at Berry Springs in 1996 and has since spread to commercial plantings at Lambell's Lagoon, Middle Point and Wanderrie Road and is currently restricted to those areas only. It is not been found in Darwin or Palmerston or other rural areas.
- ◀ It is an exotic disease and any new outbreak should be reported to DPIFM so it can be treated to restrict its further spread.

About Panama Disease:

- ◀ The disease in the NT is caused by fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* cf. *cubense* Tropical Race4 (FOCTR4 for short).
- ◀ It is specific to bananas and is not known to cause disease symptoms in any other species of plant.
- ◀ Infected banana plants show symptoms of yellowing, then wilt and die.
- ◀ Dark red/brown or maroon stripes develop in the trunk as the disease progresses and the plant dies.
- ◀ Some suckers often survive but are infected and will die later.
- ◀ It is VERY infectious and easily spread in soil and on tools and footwear.
- ◀ It kills all commonly grown banana varieties.

There is no known cure or treatment for the disease once infection has occurred:

- ◀ FOCTR4 can exist in the soil and on certain weeds at very low levels for over 10 years even after the banana plants have died out so any infected area could be considered infected for a long period.
- ◀ Any banana plants replanted near old diseased sites will eventually become diseased and die.
- ◀ Burning the plant where it stands has proved one of the best methods of treatment for individual plants so far.

The disease is moved in infected soil and plant parts and on tools and footwear:

- ◀ Do not move any suspect plants or soil from the area.
- ◀ Spray all tools and footwear that has come in contact with the suspect plant with household bleach and contact DPIFM. Skilled staff can advise and assist with treatment.

Things that look like Panama Disease:

- ◀ There is a bacterial disease that causes a sudden yellowing and wilting of bananas. While it can kill individual stems, it is not a serious problem and it can be controlled by cultural methods.
- ◀ Severe nutrient and water deficiencies can also occasionally look like Fusarium Wilt Disease.
- ◀ If in doubt at all please contact DPIFM on 8999 2357 for help and advice.