



Biosecurity alert: Papaya sticky disease



What to look for and how to report suspect disease

Papaya growers are urged to check their papaya plants for signs of discharge of watery translucent latex from undamaged green fruit that hardens and darkens upon contact with air. If you suspect papaya sticky disease in your plants, please report it; it is a declared pest in Western Australia.



What to look for

The most obvious sign of papaya sticky disease is discharge of watery translucent latex from undamaged green fruit. Once latex comes into contact with the air it hardens and turns brown. Latex is also secreted from the edge of young leaves at the top of the plant, and leaf tips and borders turn brown.



How does the disease survive and spread?

The disease is transmissible via seeds that then produce infected plants. The disease spreads from plant to plant through pruning and fruit picking. It is suspected that leafhoppers or whiteflies may also spread papaya sticky disease, but this has not yet been proved.

Papaya sticky disease can be spread in infected tissue culture plants.

What damage can this pest cause?

Papaya sticky disease can spread rapidly through papaya plantings, making the fruit unattractive and unmarketable. The disease often makes fruit taste unpleasant.

There is no cure for plants with papaya sticky disease.

Early detection and removal of infected plants is key to reducing the spread to healthy plants. If not managed, the virus can spread to 100% of a crop by the time harvest would normally begin.

The fruit from infected plants cannot be marketed.

Status in Western Australia

Papaya sticky disease (caused by *Umbravirus papaya meleira virus 2* and *Totivirus papaya meleira virus*) is absent from Western Australia and is a quarantine pest.

It is a prohibited organism under section 12 of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*.

Western Australia's Pest Freedom for Papaya sticky disease is supported by general and specific surveillance. A person who finds or suspects the presence of Papaya sticky disease must report it to DPIRD.



Report your observations

MyPestGuide® Reporter
via app or online
mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au

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