

FOREST WATCH AUSTRALIA PROGRAM SUMMARY 2023-24



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Summary

Rising trade, increased movement of people and goods, and climate change are driving a steady increase in the establishment of exotic forest pests in Australia. The arrival of these new pests poses significant economic, environmental, and social costs, impacting stakeholders across government, industry, and local communities.

Forest Watch Australia is a post-border surveillance program established through a partnership agreement between governments, the forest sector and community and environment groups. Plant Health Australia (PHA) coordinates the program's delivery, with activities collaboratively implemented through government agencies.

The program aims to enhance Australia's biosecurity system through coordinated, risk-based surveillance activities, enabling early detection of exotic forest pests and improving the likelihood of successful pest eradication or containment before significant impacts occur.

In 2023-24, Forest Watch Australia activities were delivered in New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia. The program delivered on its aims through:

- Analyzing and mapping areas at highest risk of pest entry nationwide.
- Identifying high-risk sites in each state for trapping and visual surveillance.
- Hosting a national training workshop in Queensland on pest detection methods, attended by staff implementing the program.
- Setting up and maintaining lure-based traps for forest pests.
- Identification and visual surveillance of potential hosts of exotic forest pests.
- Performing diagnostic testing on samples collected through trapping and visual checks.
- Delivering jurisdictional stakeholder training workshops to build awareness, capacity and encourage reporting of unusual pests.

These activities resulted in:

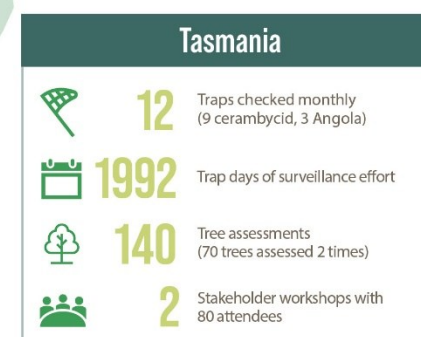
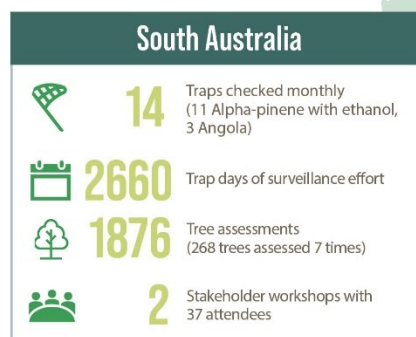
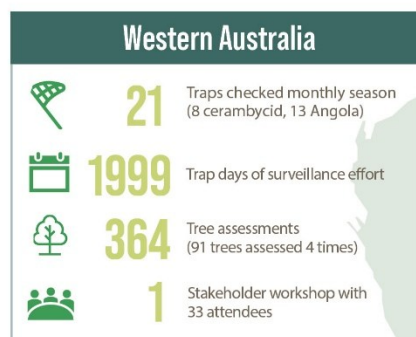
- Deployment of 165 insect traps across Australia, monitored monthly from October 2023 to April 2024 (and April to October in the Northern Territory).
- A collective surveillance effort of 26,918 trap days¹.
- Conducting 6,072 visual assessments of trees specifically targeting exotic pests.
- Uploading 23,191 pest absence records to AUSPestCheck® in the 2023-24 financial year.
- Organising 12 stakeholder training workshops, involving 344 participants.

All data collected through the program has been integrated into Australia's biosecurity surveillance data repository, AusPestCheck®. This data reinforces Australia's claims of pest-free areas for significant exotic forest pests, supporting trade and market access for forest products.

In summary, the Program's first year of operation has delivered significant improvements to Australia's post-border surveillance capacity and capability targeting exotic pests of forest trees.

¹ Trap days is a measure of surveillance effort and represents the number of traps deployed multiplied by the number of days each trap was deployed in the field.

Surveillance 2023-24



Building expertise

PHA collaborated closely with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) and Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) to deliver a successful Expert Surveillance Training Workshop. Held in Brisbane from 7 -8 November 2023, the workshop brought together 20 participants, including representatives from all jurisdictions involved in the Program.

Attendees gained in-depth knowledge on:

- trap setup and maintenance
- conducting visual tree health assessments
- triage of trap captures.

This expert training significantly enhanced participants' understanding of surveillance techniques and strengthened forest pest surveillance capacity across jurisdictions, marking an important step forward in national biosecurity efforts.



Participants involved in the Expert Training workshop held in Brisbane November 2023

Creating a surveillance community

Forest Watch Australia includes the delivery of stakeholder training sessions designed to increase awareness of forestry pests within the community, focusing on individuals working in high-risk areas near ports of entry.

In 2023-24, the program delivered 12 workshops, training 344 participants. These workshops also introduced the newly developed [MyPestGuide® Trees](#) app, which has been designed to facilitate pest identification and reporting of exotic pest sightings.

These initiatives foster a proactive surveillance community dedicated to safeguarding Australia's forests.



MyPestGuide® Trees

A new mobile APP to help you identify tree pests and diseases FAST



Target pests

The Program focuses on surveillance activities for the early detection of exotic High Priority Pests (HPPs) affecting native, plantation, and urban forest trees (Table 1).

Although these activities focused on the listed exotic HPPs, surveillance methods are designed to detect any unusual insects, pathogens, host symptoms, and signs that may indicate biosecurity concerns. *Detection efforts are therefore not limited to exotic pest of forests or trees listed below.*

Table 1: List of surveillance targets for 2023-24²

SCIENTIFIC NAME COMMON NAME	LISTING	HOSTS	TRAPPING	HOST-MONITORING	STAKEHOLDER SURVEILLANCE
<i>Anoplophora</i> spp. Longhorn Beetles	NPPP	M	✓	✓	✓
<i>Arhopalus ferus</i> Burnt pine longicorn	HPP	S, A	✓	✓	✓
<i>Austropuccinia psidii</i> (exotic strains) Myrtle rust (other exotic strains)	EEPL, NPPP, HPP	N, A		✓	✓
<i>Bursaphelenchus</i> spp. Pinewood nematode species complex	NPPP, HPP	S, A		✓	✓
<i>Coptotermes formosanus</i> Formosan subterranean termite	EEPL, NPPP, HPP	T		✓	✓
<i>Coptotermes gestroi</i> Asian subterranean termite	NPPP, HPP	T		✓	✓
<i>Dendroctonus</i> spp. Bark beetles	HPP	S, A	✓	✓	✓
<i>Dendroctonus valens</i> Red turpentine beetle	HPP	S, A	✓	✓	✓
<i>Fusarium circinatum</i> Pine pitch canker	NPP, HPP	S, A		✓	✓
<i>Lymantria dispar</i> (and sub species) Spongy moth	EEPL, NPPP, HPP	M		✓	✓
<i>Lymantria monacha</i> Nun moth	EEPL, NPPP, HPP	M		✓	✓
<i>Monochamus</i> spp. Longhorn beetles	NPPP, HPP	S, A	✓	✓	✓
<i>Monochamus alternatus</i> Japanese pine sawyer beetle	NPP, HPP	S, A	✓	✓	✓
<i>Phytophthora pinifolia</i> Daño foliar del Pino	HPP	S, A		✓	✓
<i>Phytophthora pluvialis</i> Red needle cast	HPP	S, A		✓	✓
<i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> Sudden oak death	EEPL, NPPP, HPP	M		✓	✓
<i>Teratosphaeria destructans</i> Eucalypt leaf blight	EEPL, HPP	N, A		✓	✓
<i>Tomicus piniperda</i> Pine shoot beetle	HPP	S, A	✓	✓	✓

² Surveillance pest targets were collated from various national pest lists: EEPL= [Exotic Environmental Pest List](#), NPPP = [National Priority Plant Pests](#), HPP = [High Priority Pest for Plantation Forests](#). Indication of the forest types where pest impacts are likely to occur is given by: A= Amenity, H= hardwood plantation, M= Multiple, N= native forest, S= softwood plantation, T= Timber)

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