Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Pest reporting and pest status management

How to fulfil obligations, determine status, maintain reports and close cases

Routine plant health surveillance

Annual and multi-annual detection surveys provide evidence of pest freedom and identify new threats and are supplemented by risk-based commodity border inspections

1. **SELECT SITES** — Plant Health Authority surveys a proportion of site types in each region every year.
2. **INSPECT & SAMPLE** — Surveys usually involve visual inspection and collection of samples for laboratory diagnosis.
3. **BUILD EVIDENCE** — Results support evidence of country freedom and pest-free areas, helping facilitate trade.
4. **DETECT THREATS** — Surveillance helps protect industry, agriculture and the wider environment from new pests and diseases.

WHERE SURVEYS TAKE PLACE

Examples include:

- farms, orchards and potato fields
- nurseries, garden centres and retail sites
- protected crops, soft fruit sites and vineyards
- parks, gardens and the wider environment

Legal basis: assimilated Regulation (EU) 2016/2031; inspection powers under the Official Controls Regulations 2019.

Routine surveillance supports pest-status evidence; confirmed findings trigger delimiting surveillance and outbreak action.

Official import inspections and interceptions

Risk-based border controls verify compliance and prevent pest entry

1 DOCUMENTARY CHECK

Phytosanitary certificate (PC) and import notification checked against the commodity requirements.

2 IDENTITY & INTEGRITY

Consignment, marks, packaging and accompanying information are matched and verified.

3 PHYSICAL INSPECTION

Official visual examination; samples may be taken for diagnosis or testing.

4 DECISION

Compliant goods are released. Non-compliance triggers official action and an interception record.

HOW CONTROLS APPLY IN GREAT BRITAIN

- High- and medium-risk A goods: PC, pre-notification and SPS documentary, identity and physical checks at a Border Control Point (BCP) or Control Point.
- Medium-risk B goods: PC required; pre-notification is not required.
- Regulated timber, wood products and bark: plant-health inspection on arrival.

INTERCEPTIONS: WHEN GOODS FAIL

An interception is a finding of non-compliance during import controls. It's important to ensure notification of interception is shared with the exporting country's NPPO at the earliest opportunity, to allow prompt investigation of non-compliance, especially where the interception concerns a harmful organism.

Official action can include remedial treatment, destruction or re-export, according to the circumstances and legal requirements.

Plant passporting: traceability that supports outbreak response

Plant passports provide assurance and a traceable evidence chain for regulated internal movements



Grower → trade unit → retailer → official oversight

1

AUTHORISE

Professional operators register and, where needed, are authorised to issue the plant passports.

2

ASSURE

Before issue, regulated material must meet the relevant plant-health requirements.

3

TRACE

The passport identifies the material, operator and traceability unit as it moves through the supply chain.

4

ACT

If a pest is found, records support tracing, delimitation, risk assessment and targeted controls.

ROLE IN PEST REPORTING AND STATUS MANAGEMENT

Passport and movement records can help establish origin, distribution and onward destinations. This strengthens the evidence used to investigate findings, define the affected area, coordinate control action and keep pest status current.

Reporting obligations: what must be done when there are confirmed pest findings

From detection to formal notification and ongoing updates

1

Detect & verify

Surveillance, diagnostic samples, or reports from industry, NPPOs or the public.

2

Escalate & assess

Notify the responsible manager or risk team; gather information and make a decision to escalate.

3

Decide & coordinate

Outbreak Triage Group (OTG) assesses feasibility of eradication and sets Control Authority and alert level; Incident Management Team (IMT) manages the response.

4

Report & update

Plant Health Policy notifies IPPC, EPPO and countries at risk, with significant developments.

Core principle: make the evidence traceable, the decision explicit and the status current.

Benefits and challenges of outbreak reporting

Better decisions depend on timely, complete and proportionate information

Benefits

- Protects biosecurity in trade, alerting others to potential risks
- Creates a shared operating picture across organisations
- Enables international transparency through IPPC and EPPO
- Promotes reputation and credibility with trading partners

Challenges

- Early information may be incomplete or uncertain
- There is a balance between reporting speed and having sufficient information to determine pest status
- Detection, diagnosis and mapping require specialist capacity
- Trade, media and stakeholder interest can increase pressure
- Long surveillance periods during outbreak complicate status and closure decisions



National experience: determining pest status in an outbreak

England & Wales uses a structured evidence-to-decision model



1

Evidence base

Pest identity, confirmation status, location, host, damage, origin, extent, spread likelihood and actions taken.

2

Triage decision

OTG applies an investigation and assessment template, then sets White, Black, Amber or Red alert status.

3

Feasibility test

Host importance, likely impact, cost and practicality of controls, current distribution and the consequence of delay.

4

National coordination

Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) usually leads horticultural settings, Forestry Commission (FC) forestry settings, while Defra can coordinate complex Amber or Red incidents.

Managing pest reports, status and reporting tools

A controlled lifecycle supported by a connected evidence chain

CASE LIFECYCLE		
INVESTIGATE	**Confirm or rule out**	Gather evidence, sample, diagnose, trace and delimit.
RESPOND	**Contain or eradicate**	Use an Incident Action Plan (IAP), surveillance, controls, restrictions, situation reports and logs.
RECOVER	**Prove outcome**	Continue surveillance to the required confidence and prepare handover.
CLOSE / TRANSITION	**Declare and notify**	Declare eradication or move to containment or management; notify partners and international bodies.

SUPPORTING TOOLS	
UKPHINS	Store outbreak data.
Outbreak dashboard	Track active major and minor outbreaks and retain closed records.
SharePoint workspace	Hold meeting materials, templates, role checklists, surveillance plans and communications.
Incident action plan	Set objectives, priorities, governance, protocols, resources and safety considerations.
Situation reports & COP	Maintain a dated operational and strategic picture.
International reporting	Publish occurrence, outbreak and spread information through IPPC and report similar information to EPPO.

National process alignment with ISPM standards

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD	HOW THE ELEMENTS OF THE PLANT HEALTH SYSTEM ALIGN
ISPM 6 | Surveillance	Routine and outbreak surveillance generate pest records and evidence for detection, pest freedom and delimitation.
ISPM 8 | Determination of pest status	Identity, location, host, distribution, origin, actions and uncertainty are evaluated to determine and maintain pest status.
ISPM 17 | Pest reporting	Confirmed findings and significant developments are notified; reports are updated as the incident and pest status change.
ISPM 23 | Guidelines for inspection	Import inspection verifies consignment compliance through visual examination, documentary checks, and identity and integrity checks.
ISPM 6, 8, 17 & 23	Surveillance, status determination, reporting and border inspection form a connected evidence chain from detection to closure.

Alignment: inspect at the border → detect through surveillance → determine and maintain pest status → report and update → close with evidence