

## NEGLECTED LANDS & LANDHOLDER RESPONSIBILITY

All Victorian landholders carry the responsibility of keeping pests and disease under control on their property. DPI Plant Standards Branch is responsible for the governance of this issue and is the recipient of complaints relating to the prevalence of pests and or diseases on neglected properties across the state.

A neglected property may create a haven for pest and disease development and spread. This situation has the potential for generating problems for neighbouring properties, and may result in an intensive spray program in order to bring the pest or disease under control, adding to the cost of production and more chemicals to the food chain; an undesirable outcome for Victorian agriculture.

Neglected properties reported to Department of Primary Industries are investigated under the Infested Land provisions of the Plant Health & Plant Products Act 1995 (the Act). As part of the neglected lands investigation process an inspection is undertaken of the reported property in order to ascertain if an exotic or declared pests or diseases can be found, and if an Infested Land Notice needs to be issued.

An Infested Land Notice places the landholder under specific time parameters to comply with prescribed activities within that Notice and explains the substantial financial penalties for non compliance. The required activities relate to pest and disease control and/or prevention measures that need to be undertaken by the landholder.

In addition to penalties, where non compliance with the requirements of the Notice is found to occur Plant Standards will, under the provisions of the Act, arrange for a contractor to undertake the necessary work on the property. All costs and on going expenses are passed back to the landholder.

In relation to the longer-term management of unviable or abandoned horticultural properties, the outcome everyone is looking for is satisfactory land management. Rotary hoeing, implementing effective spraying programs, regular weed slashing and dealing with fallen fruit are basic and expected management activities which are the responsibility of any landholder.

If the orchard/vineyard is no longer viable then the trees/vines should be destroyed (bulldozed), otherwise it is only a matter of time before endemic pest and diseases manifest to become problematic.

Anyone who is adversely affected by pests or diseases stemming from an abandoned property should contact the DPI Call Centre by phoning 1800-084-881. When reporting a property of concern the call centre will require certain information from you so that the matter can be dealt with expeditiously.