

QFly 2024: Scenarios to secure produce passing through the Canning Vale market.

Queensland fruit fly (QFly) was detected in Willagee and surrounding suburbs in late November 2024. QFly is one of Australia's most serious pests, threatening over 300 types of fruits and vegetables. It is found in the eastern states and is a declared pest in Western Australia (WA) that needs to be eradicated if found. It is vital for WA's horticultural industries, and for home gardeners growing QFly host fruit that we eradicate this outbreak.

On Friday 6 December 2024 a Quarantine Area Notice (QAN) was gazetted and published in the Western Australian newspaper. The notice includes an export assurance zone (EAZ) within a 15km radius from the detection epicentre. The QAN applies conditions on the movement of host plants and fruit (Figure 1) including:

- Host fruit and vegetables grown in the EAZ for commercial purposes must be treated and securely packaged to be able to leave the EAZ.
- Host fruit and vegetables originating outside the EAZ and being transported through the EAZ must be moved under secure conditions such that the product cannot be accessed by a QFly.
- **Host fruit and vegetables originating outside the EAZ that are unloaded must be kept under secure conditions as much as practically possible.**
- Fruit fly measures approved by the Departments Chief Plant Biosecurity Officer.

The 15km radius includes the Canning Vale market. Wholesalers at Canning Vale market sell fresh produce to supermarkets, greengrocers and the public. Wholesalers at the Market expressed concerns with impractical conditions imposed in the quarantine area during past QFly responses.

On Friday 29 November, representative of DPIRD working on the QFly incident visited the Market West reference group at the markets to discuss and discover scenarios that had negatively impacted them during past QFly incidents. Wholesalers were also encouraged to provide pragmatic solutions that could be discussed with subject matter experts.

The following scenarios were identified, and potential pragmatic solutions were discussed with the QFly Subject Matter Experts at DPIRD.

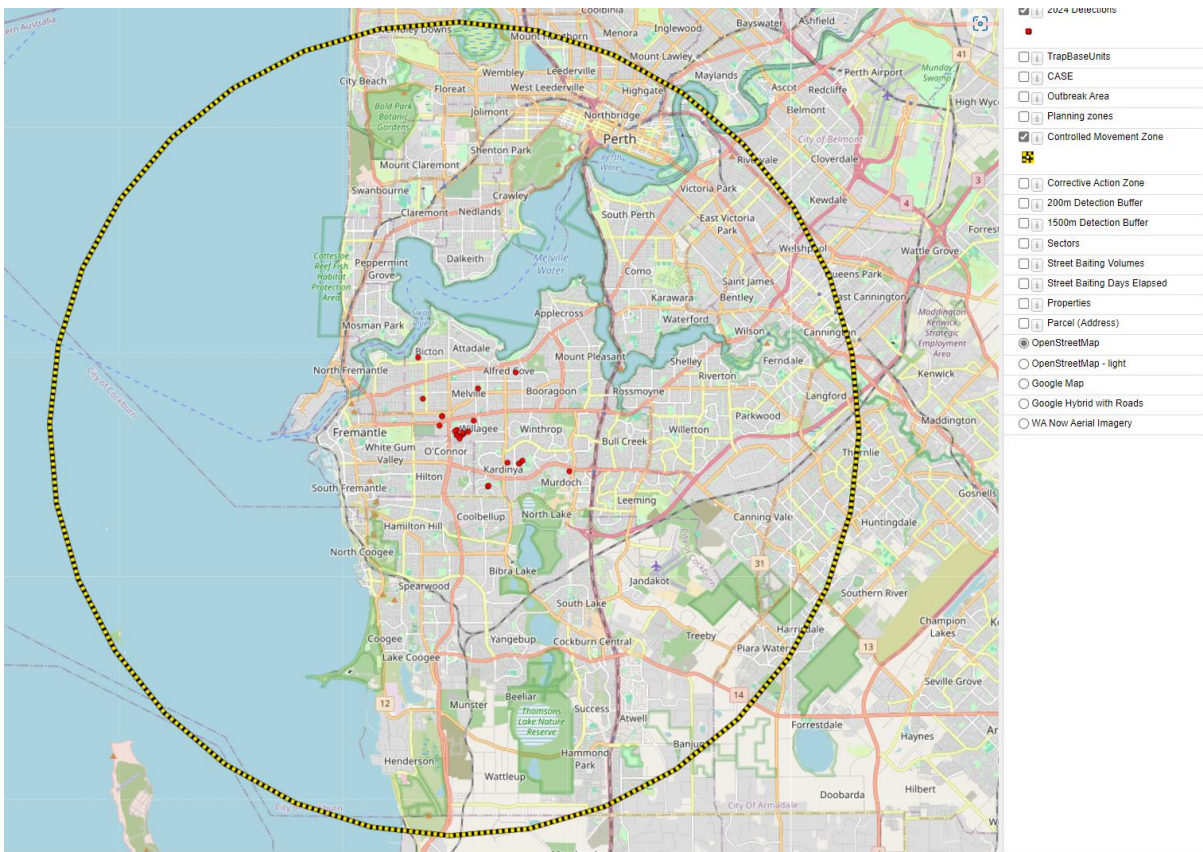


Figure 1 Export Assurance Zone for the Queensland fruit fly incident 2024.

Scenario 1. Forklift operations

Produce being moved from point to point on a forklift does not need to be securely transported. If the product is being left in the open at the conclusion of transit, it must be covered such that a QFly cannot reasonably access the products.



Figure 2 Forklift at the market.

Scenario 2. Boxes on a pallet with a hole in the middle

Mango and other produce trays are stacked in such a manner on a pallet that there is a hole in the middle of the boxes with QFly access from underneath the pallet (Figure 3). Covers placed underneath the pallet often tore, mats were tried under the pallets, but this caused pallets to slip off forklifts.



Figure 3. Produce trays on a pallet.

Where the products are required to be securely stored, a bag can be down the centre of the hole, then this will be considered securely covered for the centre and beneath the pallet. Note the products themselves will still need to be securely packaged.

Scenario 3. Buyers tearing open secured covers in buyer bays

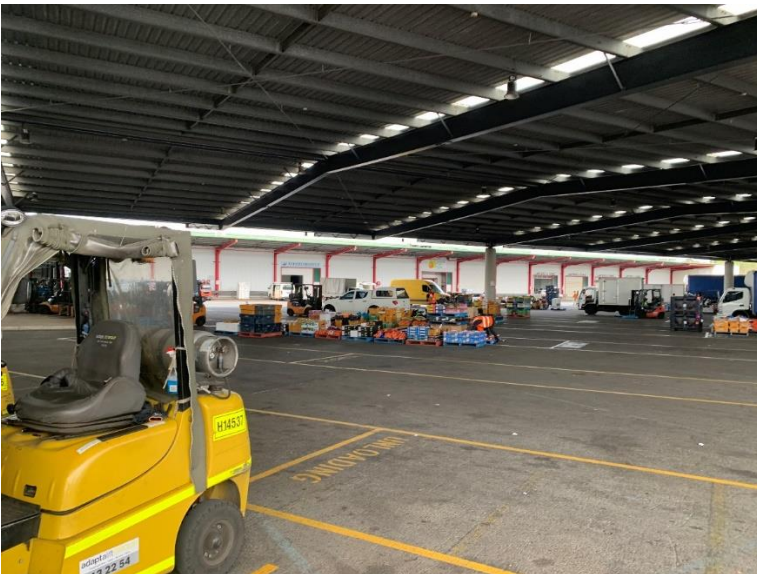


Figure 4. Buyer bay at the Canning Vale market.

Fruit needs to be securely covered in the buyer bays. It is recommended that wholesalers take a photo of the produce left in buyer bays to protect themselves. Markets West and DPIRD are considering options such as providing a wrap for buyers to recover their consignments.

Scenario 4. Use of automatic rapid doors

Automatic rapid doors comply with the requirements for an area to be considered a secure space. The fresh produce in these areas does not need to be covered.

Scenario 5. Use of air curtains as a door

Air curtains where placed across doorways comply with the requirements for an area to be considered a secure space. The fresh produce in these areas does not need to be covered.

Scenario 6. Putting together an order

When wholesalers are putting together an order for a client they take produce from multiple stacks of pallets. Provided the order being put together does not remain uncovered for longer than 20 minutes then this is deemed as acceptable. Note that the floor stock must be recovered after products are removed.

Scenario 7. Secure storage requirements for produce

Acceptable secure storage requirements include items, such as plastic wrap, netting, hessian etc, that prevent infestation by QFly.

Scenario 8. Compliance from orchardists delivering to the market

DPIRD will work with growers to ensure that they comply with the secure transporting requirements to prevent QFly infestation. Market operators are encouraged to work with growers to explore secure packaging options during packing.

Scenario 9. Buyers inspecting or purchasing host produce

Buyers removing secure packaging to inspect or purchase products should be encouraged to replace the packaging (e.g. netting). This applies to both wholesale and retail market operations.

Scenario 10. Prepacked produce / bananas with small diameter holes, in a box



Figure 5. Prepackaged produce in a bag with holes in a box with handles and breather holes.

If the prepackaged bags are not opened and the boxes are kept closed with minimal air space between the bag and the box, then this is considered to be securely covered. The outside of the pallet does not need to be covered.

Scenario 11. Grading of host produce

Products can be left in place i.e. figure 6, provided that the products are being actively graded. They cannot be stored.



Figure 6. Pallets waiting to be graded.

Scenario 12. Distribution of produce in a cold chain.

QFly prefer warm conditions. If the fruit can be kept cool and fruit is not sitting for long periods of time uncovered as per client's requirements then no further action is required.

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