The dedicated team of the National Grapevine Leaf Rust Eradication program created history today by completing the largest single yard to yard survey in the Northern Territory.

Primary Industry Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said the team has successfully checked every household yard in Darwin and Palmerston in an effort to rid the Northern Territory of Grapevine Leaf Rust Disease. The final two remaining households were checked this morning.

“Altogether, 38,954 properties in Darwin and Palmerston were checked, with 725 grapevines found on 508 properties,” he said.

“Of these, 429 grapevines were removed and destroyed. The 296 remaining grapevines will be monitored for at least the next two years.”

To date almost $1.5 million in funding has been provided from Australia’s grape-growing states and the Commonwealth to run the eradication program designed to protect Australia’s $4.7 billion a-year wine and tablegrape industries, including Central Australia’s Ti-Tree tablegrape production area.

“This is a great result. Not only does it protect jobs for Territorians in our emerging tablegrape industry, but it also helps protect the Australian industry and helps move the Territory ahead.”

The Darwin-based eradication team, attached to the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development, coordinated and managed the program, beginning with extensive surveys of every Darwin and Palmerston household and property to record all grapevines and remove those infected with the rust disease.

The program will continue with a smaller team working to monitor the remaining healthy vines. There must be two years with no detection of the disease before the Northern Territory can be declared free of grapevine leaf rust.

Quarantine restrictions are still in place, prohibiting the propagation and replanting or movement of any grapevine plant material within a 50 km radius of the Winnellie PO, and this will remain in place until at least 30 June 2006.

“An eradication program of this scale has never been attempted before in the Territory, and it could not have been possible without the cooperation and help of the community,” said Mr Vatskalis.