Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, Willem Westra van Holthe, has announced today that the Northern Territory Government, in cooperation with stakeholders and State Governments, will move swiftly to eradicate Banana Freckle from infected Territory properties.

A meeting of the National Management Group was convened. At the meeting a decision to support the Territory Government’s response plan to eradicate Banana Freckle from infected Territory properties was passed unanimously.

This invokes the provisions of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed which allows for the sharing of eradication expenses and compensation for affected commercial growers.

Mr Westra van Holthe said since August of this year the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (DPIF) has been responding to the discovery of the banana fungal pest, Phyllosticta cavendishii or Banana Freckle.

“The detection was on Cavendish bananas and is the first time this has been reported in the Territory,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“Further surveillance has now detected more infected properties, bringing the total to nine.

“The eradication work will be carried out by contractors under the supervision of departmental plant biosecurity staff.

“We will eradicate all banana plants within a one kilometre zone of infected properties, to ensure the risk is minimized.

“We will continue surveillance outside the one kilometre eradication zone.

“Commercial properties that are infected and meet the criteria will be eligible for compensation for their loss of income and representatives from DPIF will be meeting with them as soon as possible to discuss options.

“The Department is not treating this matter lightly; we are acting in the interests of the local industry and meeting our commitments to the national industry.”

Anyone who has banana plants on their property and notices dark sandpaper-like bumps on the leaves or fruit is encouraged to call the Banana Freckle hotline on 1800 771 163.

**Media Contact:**
Jack Cranwell 0428 574 943