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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Queensland fruit nursery finalist for biosecurity award

Sandra and Peter Young's holistic approach to biosecurity at their nursery at Woombye has seen them selected as finalists for the second year in a row for the Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award.

The Youngs own and operate Birdwood Nursery Fruit Trees, Queensland's leading tropical and subtropical fruit production nursery.

Producing more than 150,000 trees annually, Mr Young says biosecurity has been at the very forefront of production processes in the business.

"The production nursery was originally built to produce avocado trees tested free of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* root rot disease as part of the industry disease management program," he said.

"We are the only Australian production nursery using disease resistant clonal root stock for avocado, generated using a 'Chinese grafting' technique I discovered while on a trip to China 30 years ago. It's a major point of difference between us and our competitors."

These days there's not just guacamole on the menu, with the Birdwood Nursery range of plants reading more like a fruit salad recipe. They also provide home gardeners and hobby farmers with Gourmet Lovers and Fruit Lovers collections of stock.

Mr Young said: "Following the floods earlier this year, we received orders to replace the damaged fruit trees of commercial growers. For some it's around 30 to 40 per cent of their orchard. For others the whole lot needed replacing."

Birdwood helped pioneer a nursery industry accreditation scheme and in 2006 became one of the first nurseries to achieve EcoHort certification.

Birdwood grow all of their tree stock under the Avocado Nursery Voluntary Accreditation Scheme (ANVAS) guidelines. To prevent pests and diseases, all plants are grown in containers on benches in a steam-pasteurised growing mix and watered with disinfected (chlorinated) water. Samples of plant root and soil are regularly tested for diseases.

Mr Young said: "Farm biosecurity has always been at the forefront of the production processes across Birdwood Nursery operations to supply good quality, healthy fruit trees to clients."

Earlier this year, Birdwood was proud to become the first fruit tree nursery in Australia to be accredited for BioSecure HACCP, designed by industry for Australian production nurseries.

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For more information on Farm Biosecurity visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au)

Mr Young views his business as providing a service to the fruit industry. He is very much aware that the livelihood of growers depends on the quality of the stock that he provides.

Speaking from an international avocado conference in Cairns, he said: "I use events like this to maintain contact with those in the industry and to find out the latest ideas from growers, suppliers and industry members from all over the world."

The aim of using the protocols and procedures of HACCP is to maintain the production site and nursery stock free of unwanted pest, disease and weed threats by prevention, early detection and planned, managed responses.

Sound record keeping at critical points in the plant production allows plants to be traced from entry to the nursery all the way to despatch.

Mr Young also uses biological control in the nursery: "Although initially expensive, this has been offset by lower chemical and labour costs and a more sustainable and healthy environment for our workers and neighbours."

Mr Young's tip for farmers is to use all available means to ensure good farm biosecurity, to enhance plant health, productivity and profitability. He also advises the use of genetic resistance or tolerance where it is available, and the use of biocontrol agents, access control, and the judicious use of chemicals.

"A sound on-farm biosecurity program becomes part of your brand and will help to maintain market access and open new opportunities into the future," said Mr Young.

Sandra and Peter Young take great pride in promoting biosecurity, both within the industry and to other industries.

Judges for the award were impressed by the Youngs' clear passion for their industry and their business. The pride they take in being industry advocates for biosecurity was clearly evident.

The Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award is backed by Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia – the organisations established to coordinate the growing government-industry partnership in plant and animal biosecurity. It forms part of the Australian Farmer of the Year Awards co-hosted by Kondinin Group and ABC Rural. As in past years, separate winners will be selected in the categories of plant biosecurity and animal biosecurity.

Winners of all categories in the Australian Farmer of the Year Awards will be announced at a ceremony in Sydney on 7 September.

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**For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact Sharon Abrahams, PHA, on (02) 6215 7711.**



## Further Information

### The Farm Biosecurity Initiative

Farm Biosecurity, a joint program managed by Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), is a national education and engagement campaign which provides producers with information and tools to reduce the risk of diseases, pests and weeds. Producers are encouraged to check their properties regularly and if they see anything unusual to call the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on **1800 084 881** or the **Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline** on **1800 675 888**. For further information visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au).

### Animal Health Australia

AHA is an innovative partnership involving the Australian Government, state and territory governments, major livestock industries and other stakeholders. We work with our members and stakeholders to strengthen Australia's national animal health system and maximise confidence in the safety and quality of Australia's livestock products in domestic and overseas markets. For further information, visit [www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au) or call (02) 6232 5522.

### Plant Health Australia

Plant Health Australia is the national coordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia. As a not-for-profit company, we service the needs of Members and independently advocate on behalf of the national plant biosecurity system. Our efforts enhance Australia's plant health status, assist trade, safeguard the livelihood of producers and support the sustainability and profitability of our plant industries and the communities that rely upon them. For further information, visit [www.phau.com.au](http://www.phau.com.au) or call (02) 6215 7700.

### Hotlines

The Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) and the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) are free-call telephone services provided for people to report unusual plant and animal pests and diseases. The hotlines allow callers to directly report suspect detections to an area where action can be taken by knowledgeable staff.

