



Biosecurity New Zealand

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

The BorderSpace

Working together to secure New Zealand's borders from biosecurity threats



Issue 69 | August 2026

Helping travellers get it right

We've again stepped up our public awareness work to encourage international passengers to declare or dispose of risk goods before arriving in New Zealand.



New signage at Hong Kong International Airport to remind passengers to declare or dispose risk goods.

New signage is now in place at key transit airports – Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok – with a focus on commonly seized food items. This includes regularly forgotten products, like fast food purchased at airports.

In June, we launched targeted campaigns for travellers from China, the Philippines and India, based on seizure data.

The Philippines campaign is in English and involves social media and digital advertising. It highlights items such as mangoes and pork products like chicharron, which feature highly in our seizure stats.

There is new airport signage in Shanghai, supported by digital and social content on platforms like Baidu – the Chinese equivalent of Google. The campaign focuses on pork products, duck meat, and eggs. It is delivered in Simplified Chinese and English.

We are also using digital and social media advertising to target Indian travellers. The ads focus on cooking ingredients, represented by mung beans and ginger. They are delivered in Hindi and English.

To support these campaigns, travellers can click through to [border information](#) on our website, translated into Simplified Chinese and Hindi.

Reaching friends and family

We're also targeting friends and family in New Zealand, who often influence what visitors bring. This includes digital advertising, posters in Chinese and Indian supermarkets, and ads on Indian radio stations.

These campaigns are backed by content showing that many food items are readily available here – so there's no need to bring them across the border.

...continued overleaf

Digital border future

Our digital border programme is making good progress as we work towards a more modern, streamlined experience for low-risk international air passengers.

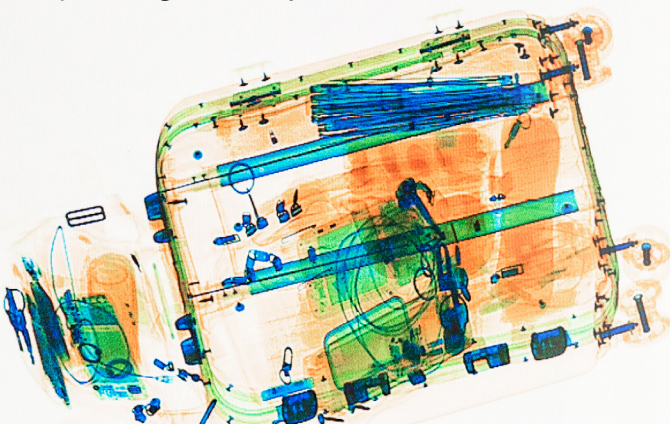
Exit Marshall Solution

A key project within the programme is the proposed “Exit Marshall Solution”. This technology uses information from the New Zealand Traveller Declaration alongside biometrics to help identify passengers and direct them to the appropriate biosecurity checks.

The aim is to identify low-risk passengers who can be directed to express lanes at airports, reducing the need for manual risk assessments by officers. This allows frontline staff to focus on higher-risk activities.

The project has now moved into the design and trial phase. The design phase began in July and is expected to run through to February 2027. This stage will ensure operational requirements and impacts are fully understood, and that the solution can be effectively integrated with existing systems.

A focus is whether the solution can support future passenger growth without increasing wait times or compromising biosecurity outcomes.



Hinemoa International Airport

To support this work, we’ve established a mock airport environment at NZ Customs’ head office in Wellington. This allows us to test the next generation of Customs eGates alongside the Exit Marshall Solution, trialling how the technology performs in practice and identifying areas that require refinement.

At the same time, we are modelling passenger data and running simulations of both the current journey and future passenger volumes. These insights will help inform how the system performs at scale and under different conditions.

New x-ray machines

As part of the digital border programme, we’re also exploring new x-ray technology to improve how we screen airport baggage and other items for biosecurity risks.

We’re looking for options that could enhance screening capability as well as make loading and unloading more efficient.

We’re currently in the request for proposal stage, giving vendors the chance to put forward their solutions. With responses due this August, there’s been strong interest. We expect proposals from five vendors.

From August, we’ll move into a full evaluation process, with rollout of the new technology expected from mid-to late 2027.



August is the Biosecurity Business Pledge’s biosecurity awareness month

Members are supporting customers, staff, suppliers and stakeholders to understand the importance of biosecurity and what good biosecurity looks like.

We’ve created pest posters for you to hang in your workplaces to help your staff identify some of our most unwanted pests – and social media posts you can share through your comms channels – available at

bbpledge.nz



**BIOSECURITY
BUSINESS
PLEDGE**
KO TĀTOU

Cruise season review

We've just done a full review of the 2025-26 cruise season, and the results make interesting reading...

Fewer arrivals

The season ran from 1 October 2025 to 30 May 2026 and saw 20 cruise lines, operating 39 vessels, visit New Zealand.

Across the season, cruise ships made 655 port calls and carried almost 161,000 passengers through New Zealand ports. While these figures were slightly lower than pre-season forecasts, they remained broadly consistent with recent trends as cruise operators adjust itineraries in response to commercial and operational factors. These include cruise lines increasingly using fewer, larger vessels.

Biofouling compliance still strong

Biofouling compliance remained particularly strong, as covered previously in [The Border Space](#). Just one vessel failed to meet New Zealand's biofouling requirements, an improvement on the previous season when three vessels failed to meet requirements. The low number of incidents demonstrates continued industry awareness of New Zealand's strict biofouling rules.

Recognised cruise line programme (RCLP)

Turning to biosecurity compliance above the waterline, the RCLP, under which 19 of the 20 cruise lines operated, contributed to the season's success. The programme allows cruise lines to manage biosecurity risks through approved systems and procedures. Vessels from lines that don't sign up to the RCLP require full biosecurity clearance every time they land in New Zealand. RCLP systems cover things like food and waste handling, and passenger awareness of biosecurity. Increasing use of multi-year approvals reduced the need for repeated documentation reviews, allowing our teams to focus on verification audits and compliance activities such as gangway checks.

RCLP audits

The season saw 22 vessel audits across 19 cruise lines, with all achieving good results. Three corrective action plans were issued during the season, relating to refuse management, pest management, and passenger information requirements. In each case, cruise operators worked constructively with Biosecurity New Zealand to address the issues, highlighting the high level of engagement and cooperation we have seen across the industry over recent seasons.

Low seizure rate

Passenger compliance was also very positive. Gangway surveillance – including baggage checks and detector dog screening – saw 170 seizure events during the season, the equivalent of just over one seizure for every 900 passengers. Most detections involved honey and bee products.

Our passenger compliance monitoring survey, which provides an additional check on how well travellers are meeting New Zealand's biosecurity requirements, surveyed 3593 passengers and crew during the season. Only three undeclared risk items were detected, resulting in an overall indicative compliance rate of 99.91 percent.

These results provide strong assurance that, supported by cruise operators, passengers are generally aware of and complying with New Zealand's biosecurity requirements.

Food for thought

We have also identified several operational developments to consider. For one, we have recognised a need for clearer national guidance for ports on managing recyclable waste, as cruise lines continue to expand recycling. Variations in waste handling between ports can create uncertainty about how biosecurity risks are assessed and managed.

There is also an opportunity to better engage with cruise operators to ensure they understand and meet their obligations to raise passenger awareness of New Zealand's biosecurity requirements.

Another emerging trend is residential-style cruise vessels and ships carrying live animals, including pet cats. While these visits were handled effectively in the 2025-26 season, they required additional coordination between Biosecurity New Zealand teams and demonstrated the need for established procedures for future seasons.



RCLP – how it works

Cruise lines that join the Recognised Cruise Line Programme (RCLP) operate under Biosecurity New Zealand-approved biosecurity systems covering key risk areas such as passenger arrivals, waste management, pest control, biosecurity messaging and biofouling.

These systems are assessed before approval and regularly checked through audits and onboard inspections to ensure they remain effective.

High participation in the programme, along with multi-year approvals for consistently compliant operators, reduces the need for repeat paperwork and some routine compliance checks.

Cruise lines that don't sign up to the RCLP must undergo full biosecurity clearance each time they arrive in New Zealand, including more intensive checks of the vessel and passengers going ashore.

Cruise season stats

20	cruise lines sent vessels to New Zealand
39	cruise vessels operated in NZ waters
160,949	cruise passengers visited NZ
655	port calls around NZ
19 of 20	cruise lines signed up to the Recognised Cruise Line Programme
22	vessel audits completed across 19 cruise lines
181	gangway surveillance activities undertaken
3593	passengers and crew surveyed under passenger compliance monitoring, with only three seizures made
99.91%	passenger compliance rate

What our compliance survey shows

This year's cruise passenger compliance monitoring (PCM) survey again shows very high levels of biosecurity compliance among cruise passengers and crew.

During the 2025-26 cruise season, 3593 passengers and crew were randomly surveyed at ports around New Zealand after completing normal biosecurity processes, providing an independent measure of how well our controls are performing.

Only three passengers were found carrying undeclared risk items, resulting in a compliance rate of 99.91%. This exceeds the target of 98.5% and improves on the previous season's result of 99.78%. The seized items included two jars of honey and a salmon bagel. No fruit, flowers or other plant products were detected.

The survey covered passengers and crew across ports nationwide, with the largest sample sizes collected at Bay of Islands, Napier, Wellington and Tauranga. Compliance rates remained consistently high across all major cruise lines, ranging from 99.72% to 100%.



Mango imports face scrutiny

We've introduced new targeting measures to identify fresh mangoes arriving from India through what we call the low-value package pathway (goods valued under \$1,000).

The move has been prompted by instances where import declarations did not accurately reflect the goods being imported.

For example, officers recently identified several packages of Indian mangoes that had been incorrectly declared as housewares or clothing.

The importers involved were referred to our compliance team to consider enforcement action.

This work will continue throughout the Indian mango season, finishing in August 2026.

Our target evaluation team is also engaging with submitters of import documents. The aim is to reinforce the importance of accurate declarations and support ongoing compliance with import requirements.

Why mangoes?

Mangoes pose several biosecurity risks, including being a host for fruit fly.

Adult fruit flies lay their eggs in fruit. When the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on the fruit, causing it to rot. This risk is managed through irradiation or heat treatment before export.

Mangoes are harvested somewhere in the world year-round. The peak mango season in India runs from March to July.

There is strong demand for mangoes in New Zealand, with more than 2600 tonnes of fresh mangoes imported each year. Most imports come from five countries: Australia, Peru, Mexico, India and Vietnam.

Between 2023 and 2025, the volume of mangoes imported from India increased by nearly 40%.

What to look for

If you are working in a transitional facility, please keep an eye out for mangoes arriving in packages. If you notice any of the following, please contact Biosecurity New Zealand.

- > Prominent sweet smell
- > Breathable boxes (air holes)
- > Boxes that are heavier than expected
- > Written declaration of mangoes (or other fresh produce) on a box but not on the manifest

Support for food Importers

The Ministry for Primary Industries' Food Importer Advice team has pulled together a guide to help importers.

New to food importing?

Start here



The guide is intended to help importers meet their food safety responsibilities, assess the food they want to bring into New Zealand, and meet border requirements.

The Food Importer Information Pack includes a checklist importers can tick off as they go, links to more information and who to contact for more help.

The team has a range of helpful website resources at **[Get Help With Importing Food](#)**. You can also email any questions to **foodimporteradvice@mpi.govt.nz**.

Pest or Pal? The sequel

Here's the second instalment of our quiz to test how well you know pests that could harm New Zealand versus more friendly organisms. This time, the focus is on marine creatures.



1. I can be the size of a Subway cookie



2. I can be the size of a dinner plate



3. One strand can be almost as long as a car



4. I usually grow to the length of a finger



5. I'm only the size of a \$1 coin



6. I can grow as long as a cricket bat



7. I'm about the size of a hand



8. I'm usually the size of a golf ball



9. I'm about the size of a small plate



10. I'm about the size of a hand



11.

To report an exotic pest or disease call 0800 80 99 66 or online at report.mpi.govt.nz

1. Pest

Asian paddle crab (*Charybdis japonica*)

- > An aggressive predator that can eat a wide range of native species
- > Adapts easily to new environments and can produce thousands of eggs several times a year, making it hard to contain once established

2. Pest

Northern Pacific seastar (*Asterias amurensis*)

- > A fast spreading, highly adaptable predator that can devastate native shellfish and cause major economic damage to fisheries and aquaculture
- > Easily spread by ships and marine equipment

3. Pest

Wakame/Asian kelp (*Undaria pinnatifida*)

- > Grows quickly and forms dense underwater forests
- > Dense stands compete with native kelp and other species for light and space
- > Fouls hard surfaces, eg. boats, ropes and reefs

4. Pest

Brown mussel (*Perna perna*)

- > Can displace native shellfish
- > Spreads rapidly and easily
- > Fouls human-made structures, eg. pipes and water intakes

5. Pest

Asian clam (*Potamocorbula amurensis*)

- > Forms dense colonies more than 25,000m²
- > In invaded areas, it can make up most of the biomass on the seafloor, overwhelming native species
- > Can strip plankton from the water, leaving less for other organisms

6. Pal

Common Kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*)

- > Grows to about 1m in length.
- > Important food source for many marine species including kina

7. Pal

Stalk-eyed mud crab (*Hemiplax hirtipes*)

- > Make long burrows and can dig into the sand whenever threatened
- > Common in seagrass meadows

8. Pal

Tuangi, cockle (*Austrovenus stutchburyi*)

- > Foot can extend from their shell to burrow or move around with.
- > Usually live up to 5-8 years

9. Pal

Three-and-three seastar (*Allostichaster insignis*)

- > Orange, red or purple
- > Usually has six arms (occasionally five)

10. Pal

Pāpaka, Swimming Paddle Crab (*Ovalipes catharus*)

- > May nip your toes at the beach if you stand on them

11. Pest

Exotic caulerpa (*Caulerpa brachypus* and *Caulerpa parvifolia*)

- > Can spread rapidly, sometimes forming extensive underwater meadows.
- > Competes with native species for space and resources, potentially disrupting the balance of local marine ecosystems

Checking in on TFs

Lead auditor trial for TFs

We're trialling a new approach to auditing multi-site transitional facilities (TFs).

The approach involves using a lead auditor to oversee TF operators that run different sites under a single, overarching operating manual.

An operating manual essentially outlines the controls that need to be in place at a facility to manage biosecurity risk.

We're keen to see if using a single auditor:

- > Makes it easier to see wider risks and trends across the multiple sites.
- > Makes audits more consistent across sites.
- > Strengthens confidence that the operating manual is working as intended.

We're running a pilot with five companies to test how well a lead auditor model works. If successful, it will be incorporated into our national performance-based verification programme.

Transitional facilities are approved sites where imported goods are held, inspected, and, if needed, treated to manage biosecurity risks before they are released into New Zealand.

Health and safety recognition

Our work to improve health and safety at transitional facilities (TFs) has been recognised on the national stage.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) – which includes Biosecurity New Zealand – was named a finalist in the Leadership category at the 2026 SafeGuard New Zealand Workplace Health and Safety Awards.

The recognition was for MPI's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Guidance for Transitional Facilities, released in October 2025. The guidance helps manage shared health and safety responsibilities across more than 3500 approved TFs throughout New Zealand.

Our officers regularly work alongside TF staff in environments where risks can include moving vehicles and mobile plant, hazardous substances, and fumigants.

MPI ultimately missed out on the Leadership Award, which was won by BESIX Wattlepac for its involvement with Christchurch's Te Kaha Stadium project. The building company also took out the Supreme Award. However, reaching the finals of a national awards programme is a significant achievement.

Congratulations to everyone involved – both within and outside MPI.



Unannounced TF verification visits – what to expect

Unannounced checks of transitional facilities (TFs) under our performance-based verification programme help confirm that measures to manage biosecurity risks from imported cargo are working as they should.

They are not about catching anyone out. Instead, they are intended to confirm that systems are working.

An unannounced verification visit may be carried out if a facility has not had one recently, if there are concerns about compliance, or to check that corrective actions are working.

On arrival, our officer will follow site procedures, including signing in, introducing themselves, and meeting all health and safety requirements.

A short entry meeting will explain what the visit will cover. These checks are usually shorter and more focused than planned audits.

During the visit, the officer will gather evidence through observations and sometimes photographs, and review relevant records.

At the end, a closing discussion outlines any findings. Operators are encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback.

As always, we encourage TFs to keep good records, run regular internal checks, and ensure staff are well trained. It's the best way to achieve good biosecurity results.

From the frontline

A selection of interesting interceptions and other border activity...

Shell stowaway



A declared seashell contained a crusty surprise for both a German passenger arriving from Fiji in June and one of our detector dog teams at Auckland Airport.

Detector dog Quantum's sniff test suggested there was something out of place in the passenger's backpack. Inspection revealed a dead hermit crab that had clearly been using the shell as its home.

As the crab was a stowaway, no fine was issued. However, the passenger received a friendly reminder on the importance of checking their baggage before arrival.

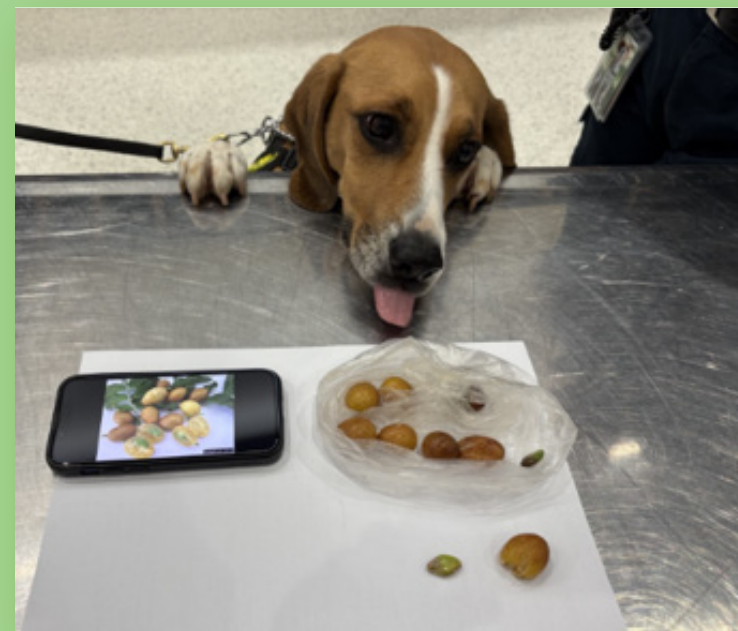
Forgotten fruit

A traveller arriving at Auckland Airport from Hong Kong was fined in June after failing to declare Chinese wampee fruit in their luggage.

The fruit, which looked like grapes, was detected after detector dog Oakley showed interest in the passenger's baggage. When questioned, the traveller used a mobile phone app to identify the fruit as Chinese wampee.

The fruit contained viable seeds, meaning it could potentially be grown if planted. As a member of the citrus family, Chinese wampee could establish in New Zealand's warmer regions and may pose biosecurity risks through the introduction of non-native plants, pests or diseases.

The traveller told officers they had forgotten to eat the fruit during the flight so had not declared it.



Rare infringement

A yacht skipper received a \$400 fine after arriving at Ōpua in June without submitting the required Advance Notice of Arrival (ANOVA) before entering New Zealand waters.

The skipper, who was sailing solo from Brisbane, arrived unannounced late on a Sunday evening. Border agencies became aware of the vessel's arrival through satellite tracking.

The ANOVA is a joint Customs and MPI requirement that allows border agencies

to assess biosecurity and other risks before a vessel arrives. It includes important information such as a vessel's recent ports of call, onboard animals, and other potential risk items.

Cases like this are rare. This is only the sixth infringement issued in Northland

for failing to submit an ANOVA in the past four years. The skipper had previously been warned about the requirements following an earlier visit.

The vessel has now been flagged for additional scrutiny on any future arrivals.

Pound to primetime – Noah's journey

Noah – one of our newest detector dog recruits – has already had a taste of stardom. His journey from the Christchurch City Council pound to the frontline was recently featured on TVNZ's *Breakfast* show in June.

Found alone in a riverbed with no microchip and no owner, Noah's future was uncertain until he was spotted in a social media post by one of our dog handlers in Christchurch.

German shorthaired pointers have made good detector dogs in the past, and Noah didn't disappoint. His early assessment revealed curiosity and a calm temperament – key detector dog qualities. After six months of intensive training in Auckland, he had met the grade, learning to detect more than 70 biosecurity risk items.

Now working at Christchurch Airport, Noah is already proving his worth. In his first week alone, he successfully sniffed out a chicken salad wrap and a pork, egg, and avocado sandwich.

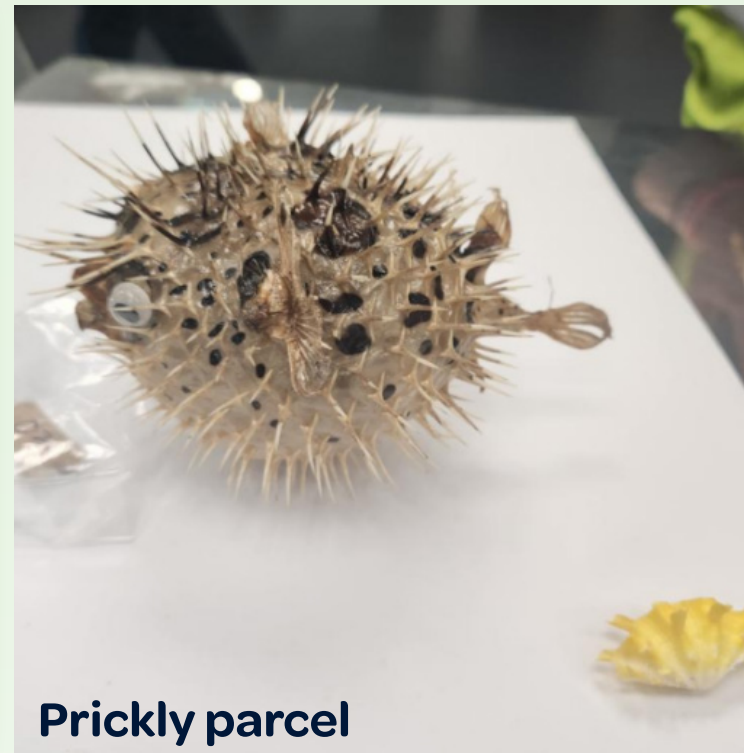
Noah isn't the only success story from outside our in-house breeding programme. Tui – a black Labrador originally trained as a mobility dog – has also joined the ranks. Paired with her handler, she passed her validation tests in record time and is already



demonstrating her capability on the frontline.

While most of our detector dogs come from our dedicated breeding programme, dogs like Noah and Tui show the value of bringing in outside talent.

At the time of writing, five dogs from outside our breeding programme have successfully passed the first stage of training this year.



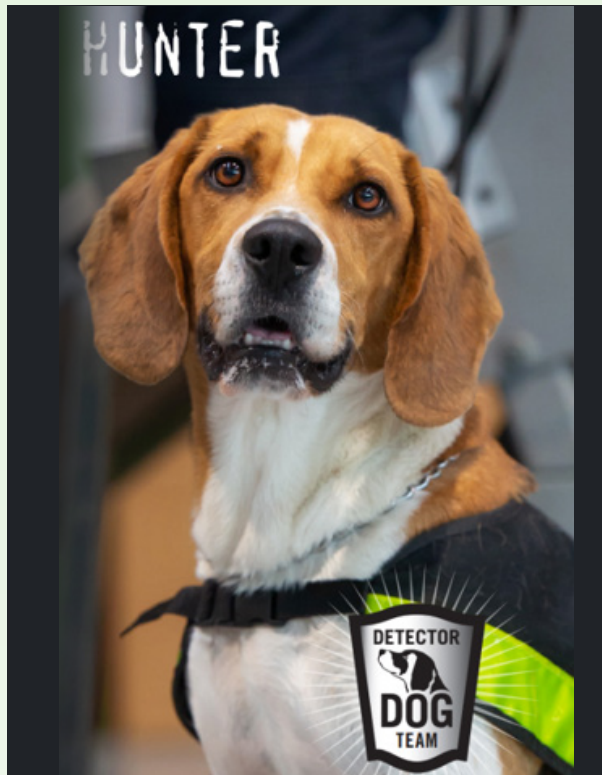
Prickly parcel

A dried pufferfish, declared as a home decoration, arrived at New Zealand Post's Auckland Processing Centre in June.

While pufferfish species are known for their potent toxin, tetrodotoxin, the item complied with import rules for personal consignments of animal products, being clean and free from visible contamination.

The species also met CITES requirements for trade in endangered species.

Pufferfish turn up at the processing centre a handful of times each year – often as decorative items. While they are considered a delicacy in countries like Japan when prepared by specially licensed chefs, in this case the fish was clearly not intended for dinner.



Fitting final day

Hunter's final patrol at the Auckland Airport carousel in June was a fitting conclusion to the veteran detector dog's exceptional career.

In just 15 minutes, he made four separate interceptions, uncovering a range of undeclared risk items – including boiled eggs, bananas, pork and chicken sausages, chicken feet, duck feet, duck necks and tongue, quail eggs, a kiwifruit, and a whole head of raw garlic.

Now nine, Hunter has been rehomed with his original handler as a companion animal. We wish him a happy retirement.



Reptiles in the post

Here's another unusual mail interception that, luckily for the importer, met biosecurity requirements and the rules for importing endangered species.

The package, arriving from the United Kingdom and stopped in late June, contained a menagerie of carefully preserved reptiles and large insects.

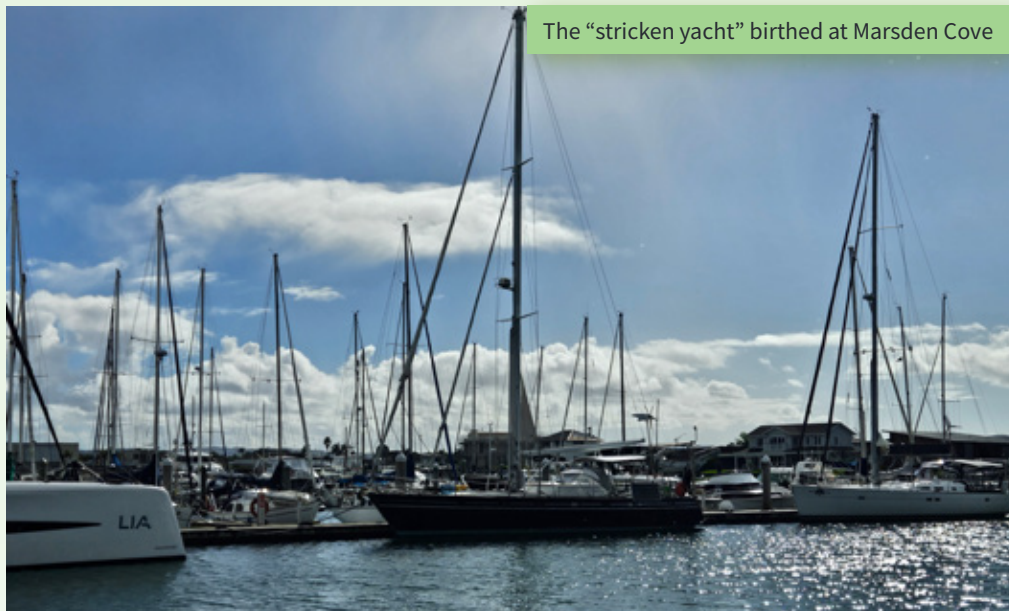
These included a red bearded flying lizard (*Draco haematopogon*), a Kuhl's flying gecko (*Ptychozoon kuhli*), rainforest tree frogs (*Rhacophorus reinwardtii*), a blue cicada (*Tosena splendida*), and a giant coconut cicada (*Angamiana floridula*).



The preserved red-bearded flying lizard

Help for stricken yacht

A stricken yacht bound for Northland in May saw a coordinated multi-agency response, with one of our local officers taking a starring role.



The “stricken yacht” birthed at Marsden Cove

Originally bound for Ōpua and carrying a seriously injured crew member, the yacht had lost engine power and was forced to make a slow, wind-dependent journey to port. The voyage ultimately ended with the coastguard towing the vessel into Marsden Cove Marina.

The officer remained in regular contact with the Rescue Coordination Centre over the three day journey.

Using a remote camera from home, he monitored the yacht’s arrival and ensured

emergency services had after-hours access to the marina’s quarantine area. This allowed the injured crew member, who had a badly dislocated shoulder, to be quickly transferred to an ambulance.

On inspection, the yacht was found to have significant biofouling and was directed to be hauled out and cleaned within 28 days.

With the crew having eaten most of their stores after the engine failed, there was little to declare. The only seizure was 800g of unpopcorned popcorn.

Jaw-dropping arrival



This toothy jaw may not be the best advertisement for tropical swimming destinations, but it passed biosecurity checks at the Auckland Processing Centre – the gateway for international mail arriving in New Zealand.

Declared as a blacktip shark, the jaw arrived with documentation showing it met the rules for trading endangered species.

It was referred to the Department of Conservation to confirm the species and double check the permit.

Double whammy



A travelling couple arriving at Auckland Airport in June both received \$400 fines for failing to declare food that could host fruit fly.

The first infringement followed detector dog Pedro indicating an issue with baggage carried by a passenger using the airport’s express lane. When questioned, the passenger declared a single mandarin.

A thorough baggage inspection revealed additional risk items, including two apples, four mandarins, two tomatoes, and two salad sandwiches. The passenger was referred to our

enforcement team and issued with an infringement notice.

While this was going on, the passenger identified a travelling partner who had been directed to x ray screening. Inspection of the partner’s baggage identified further fruit fly host material, resulting in the second infringement notice.

Border activity for May and June 2026

	May 2025	May 2026	June 2025	June 2026
Passenger				
Total arrivals	436,990	438,122	447,086	450,111
NZ/Australia	283,877	277,731	305,468	307,143
Rest of world	153,113	160,391	141,618	142,968
Risk items seized	7,463	7,049	7,616	6,489
Risk items treated or destroyed*	4,925	6,581	5,060	5,848
Infringement notices	600	576	572	570
Mail				
Mail items screened	910,597	932,915	854,126	885,339
Mail items requiring further inspection	1,791	4,453	1,614	4,781
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	235	92	216	103**
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	69,225	69,723	59,345	66,565
Sea containers inspected	2,970	3,263	3,003	3,315
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	35,801	40,833	39,755	47,815
Cargo lines inspected	5,489	5,172	5,693	5,800
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed***	1,102	1,121	1,109	1,102

*From August 2025, this figure includes items collected from amnesty bins.

** This figure is provisional and will likely be adjusted upwards. Importers are given 28 days to decide whether to treat, reship or destroy mail.

*** Cargo figures from November 2024 include new, pre-cleared and used vehicles



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