



The BorderSpace



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

Issue 67 | April 2026

Campaign on the move

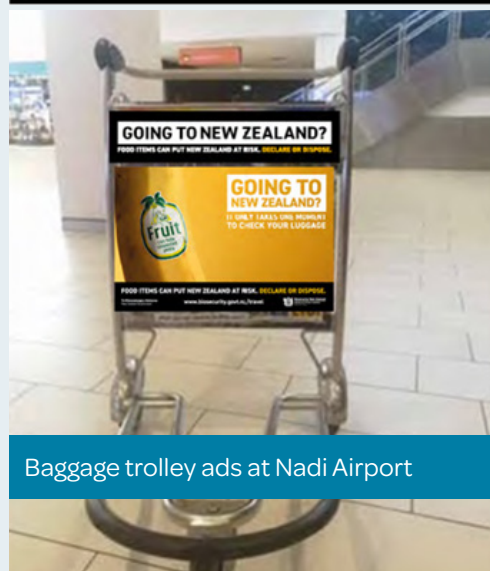
Our “It only takes one” campaign has moved further afield.

The campaign encourages international passengers to declare or dispose of risk goods.

We have just introduced departure area and baggage trolley signage at Nadi International Airport. This follows the rollout of airport signage in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States late last year.

Looking ahead, the campaign will extend to China, India and the Philippines. We will also be targeting key transit airports – Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok.

The campaign also uses digital advertising to reach travellers when they are planning their trips, including through booking and accommodation websites.



Baggage trolley ads at Nadi Airport

New “declare or dispose” campaign signage at Nadi and Auckland airports.



Service & Flight	Depart	Status
Sydney	07:00 - 10:45	Gate closed
Melbourne	07:45	
Dunedin	08:20 - 10:20	Departed
Melbourne	09:00	
Christchurch	10:00 - 10:20	Gate E
Wellington	10:30 - 10:45	Gate F - 10:45
Auckland	10:10 - 10:45	Gate F - 10:10
Wellington	10:20 - 10:20	Departed
Auckland	10:30 - 10:30	Departed

Check what you can bring back at biosecurity.govt.nz/travel

International departures 国际出发
Passengers only 仅限旅客

Departures Security
Estimated time through Customs and Aviation Security
Via eGates - ages 10+
Less than 5 minutes
All other passports
Less than 5 minutes

NZ Traveller Declaration (NZTD) update

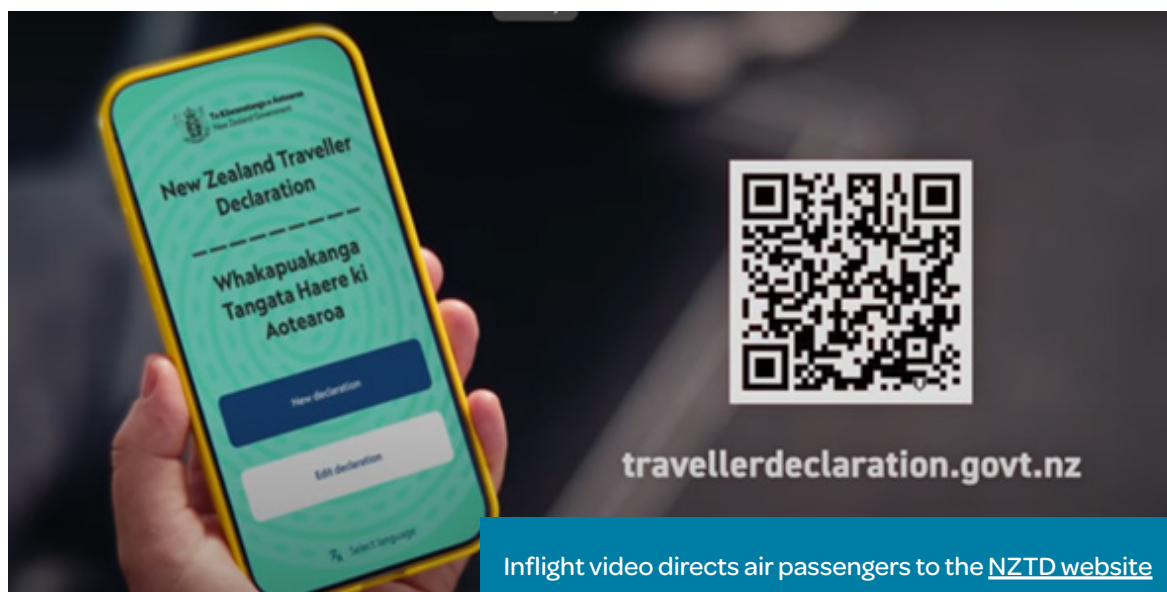
Border agencies are updating the clarifying questions used by the NZTD digital declarations system to risk assess arriving passengers.

The project team initially worked with frontline staff and legal and privacy advisers to agree on proposed updates. The questions were then refined further with airport managers, using compliance monitoring data and other information sources, to ensure any changes were practical and aligned to risk.

As part of this work, we're considering changes to the "countries visited" section. The intention is to quickly identify high-risk passengers coming from countries dealing with disease outbreaks or pest incursions. This will enable us to better target these passengers – for example, emailing brown marmorated stink bug information to travellers from affected regions prior to arrival.

Before we move on from NZTD, it's great to see the number of international travellers using digital declarations continues to increase. In February, we reached an average of 71.4% across all airports, which is a significant milestone for NZTD and beats the 70% target set by ministers when the system was first introduced.

Our new in-flight biosecurity video ([see issue 65 of The Border Space](#)) can claim credit for some of the increase. The video displays a QR code directing viewers to the NZTD website, where they can complete a declaration before landing. At the time of writing, more than 7200 international passengers have used the code.



**BIOSECURITY
BUSINESS
PLEDGE**
KO TĀTOU

The Biosecurity Business Pledge is a partnership helping all New Zealand businesses take a proactive approach to biosecurity practice.

Biosecurity protects your business, the environment and the economy.

bbpledge.nz

Fouling watch

Steady as it goes for cruise season

It's been relatively smooth sailing so far for the 2025/26 cruise season in terms of managing biosecurity risks from dirty hulls.

As with previous seasons, we worked closely with cruise operators to prepare their applications and approvals in the lead up to the season, which runs until May.

We have approved 20 systems submitted by operators to manage biofouling risk. These cover all 39 cruise vessels expected to visit New Zealand this season.

Most operators have been highly engaged. Documentation has arrived well ahead of deadlines, and vessels have generally been organised and responsive.

To date, 37 ships have already arrived fully compliant with biofouling requirements. Another vessel has been assessed as compliant but has not yet reached New Zealand.

So far, only one cruise vessel has had compliance issues. Arriving in New Zealand for the first time, the vessel was found to be fouled with high risk marine species – including mussels, oysters, and shrimps – on multiple parts of its hull.

New in water cleaning systems available in New Zealand were not suitable for removing the extensive fouling.

Following discussions with Biosecurity New Zealand prior to arrival, the operator opted to have the vessel cleaned outside New Zealand's territorial waters using a local dive company.

Concerns about residual fouling resulted in some restrictions to the vessel's visit, including its approval to visit Fiordland being revoked.

Clean arrivals

Biosecurity New Zealand appreciates the shipping industry's efforts to ensure international vessels arrive in New Zealand free from biofouling.

New Zealand's marine environment is highly vulnerable to invasive species transported on ship hulls.

Our stats show 96.4% of vessels arriving in 2025 were compliant with our biofouling rules.

Non-compliant vessels are issued a notice of direction, which lists the actions they need to take to manage the biosecurity risk to New Zealand. For instance:

- > lower-risk vessels may be allowed to complete their declared itinerary but be required to manage biofouling before their next voyage
- > hig- risk vessels may be directed to leave New Zealand within 24 hours
- > when the risk is unclear, a vessel may be directed to undertake a hull inspection

It is important to note that any directed action will always be in proportion to the risk the vessel poses.

Biofouling stats 2025

Vessel Type	Total arrived	% Compliant
Bulk Carrier	680	97.4%
Container	830	97.5%
Fishing	24	83.3%
General Cargo	77	88.3%
Passenger	92	97.8%
Reefer	67	100.0%
RoRo	154	96.8%
Tanker	310	96.8%
Other	71	78.9%
TOTAL	2305	96.4%



International biofouling rules in the pipeline

A subcommittee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has agreed to begin developing legally binding biofouling rules for global shipping.

The IMO's current international biofouling and in water cleaning guidelines are voluntary for vessel operators.

The mandatory rules are intended to build on these guidelines and on established national standards – including New Zealand's own biofouling requirements for vessels arriving in our waters.

Biosecurity New Zealand is very interested in this work. We were represented at the February meeting that started the development of the new convention (similar to an international standard).

Clear consensus

IMO member countries and industry groups looked at either creating a new, standalone convention or amending an existing one.

There was clear consensus in favour of developing a new convention. This recommendation will be put to the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) for endorsement in April.

Biosecurity New Zealand will be involved in the drafting process and will help shape a practical approach that draws on New Zealand's own experience.

The plan is to have an early draft ready by February 2027.

Further work will then continue to finalise the text. MEPC has set a four year window (2025–2029) for the drafting phase.

Developing and bringing a new IMO convention into force typically takes 10–15 years.

The IMO is the United Nations agency responsible for setting global rules for international shipping.

Trainee sniffers named

Our latest detector puppies have been named (yes, probably the most eagerly awaited news of this issue of The Border Space!)



Waly from W-litter

The seven beagles from W-litter are called Woody, Wasabi, Wilbur, Warden, Waly, Willow, and Wish. The names came courtesy of the handlers of their detector dog mum and dad, one of our specialist dog carers, a vet who was on site for the births, two auction winners from our Auckland social club, and Minister Karen Chhour (who chose Wilbur).

The four beagle puppies that make up X-litter are Xanthie, Xia, Xyla, and Xito. Our detector dog programme team drew up a list of names beginning with "X" and then picked the most popular.

W litter was born in November to Rubix and Starsky. X-litter followed in December, the offspring of detector dog programme members Spice and Clawson.

Both litters are now with their foster families, where they will undergo early training and get used to people and different sights and sounds.

At around one year old, the puppies will return to us for assessment and, if suitable, begin their next stage of training as biosecurity detector dogs.



X-litter's Xanthie

Changes to goods levies

Changes to the levies charged by Biosecurity New Zealand and NZ Customs for managing goods at the border will take effect from 1 April.

The changes follow approval by the government in March last year. They are intended to make goods levies fairer for all importers and ensure sustainable funding for border controls.

The move will not increase what is spent on biosecurity, but it will allocate costs more accurately to activities that manage biosecurity risks.

The changes include:

- > Moving to consignment based charging for the management of low value imports (goods valued at less than NZ\$1000). This means freight forwarders, brokers or carriers will be charged per consignment rather than for each submitted cargo report, which can contain multiple consignments.
- > Removing the taxpayer subsidy for border clearance of imported low value cargo and postal items.
- > Introducing a commercial vessel charge to manage the risks posed by arriving commercial ships.

The impact on shipping costs is expected to be small. For example, the levies charged by border agencies for low-value airfreight (\$1000 or less) will be \$2.21, excluding GST. The charge will be \$1.28 per kilogram, excluding GST, for goods shipped through the mail. For a typical 400g package, the additional charge will be \$0.51 excluding GST.

Traders should be aware that logistics providers may decide to pass on the cost of the new levies.

Goods levies are charged to importers, exporters, freight companies, shipping companies, and air carriers to fund crucial border services such as biosecurity and customs.

To minimise compliance costs, NZ Customs will continue to collect the levies charged by both border agencies.

More information about the goods levies can be found [here](#)

Passenger levy cut

The biosecurity charge under the Border Clearance Levy has dropped for arriving international travellers.

Announced by Biosecurity Minister Andrew Hoggard on 1 February, the charge has reduced from \$16.92 to \$12.03 for incoming air passengers.

Biosecurity New Zealand raised the border levy after COVID-19 to recover costs and rebuild operations. With air travel rebounding faster than expected, those costs have now been covered, allowing the levy to be reduced, Minister Hoggard said in a press release.

The Border Clearance Levy funds biosecurity services such as x ray screening, detector dogs, and other protections.

Funding from the levy will allow Biosecurity New Zealand to invest in new border technology, including the digital border programme.

The digital border programme will build on the successful introduction of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration, enabling more streamlined passenger processing and new x ray technology.

Further information about the Border Clearance Levy is available [here](#)

Do you import food, or work with those who do?

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has a dedicated team to help businesses understand the food safety requirements for importing food into New Zealand.

The team has a range of helpful resources and a contact form available on the **MPI website**.

Stay up to date on the rules

Food Importer News provides updates about the rules for importing food under the Food Act 2014. It is a valuable source of information for anyone who imports food for sale, or those who work with food importers.

Visit our website to subscribe and read past updates.

Keep up to date with
our newsletter for
food importers



New Zealand Food Safety
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

SailGP clearance challenge

Big international events can result in complex logistical challenges for Biosecurity New Zealand.

Such was the case this February, when SailGP turned up in Auckland with nearly 100 containers full of racing boats, team bases, and support craft, all of which had to be cleared by officers in quick smart time.

To handle the process of sorting thousands of items, our team used a few tricks to help make the potentially daunting clearance process smooth and easy.

In the past, biosecurity operations for the event began with checks at overseas

ports. No longer. Now, the process begins by directly notifying each team's importer and logistics partner about the country's biosecurity regulations before they hit the ground. This ensures they are well aware of what they should and shouldn't bring in, as well as clarifying requirements around the condition of their gear.

Individual teams have an approved cleaning and packing plan, and evidence is provided to Biosecurity New Zealand before the shipment departs that the cargo will meet relevant import health standards.

This allows cargo to move directly to the site upon arrival, with checking carried out during unpacking.

The approach is a well-oiled process that's been refined and applied to a number of major events over the years. It saves both time and extra outlay from Biosecurity New Zealand staff, and provides a clearance process that assists importers in moving cargo rapidly when needed.

We're pleased to report that everything went off without a hitch for this year's event.

As for the action on the water, the round was won by Australia's BONDS Flying Roos. It was the second round of the competition, which is due to wrap up in Abu Dhabi in November.



From the frontline

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

Not so healthy

A mail package declared as “health products” turned out to be anything but.

Intercepted using our Zulu x ray machine at the Auckland Processing Centre (APC) in February, the package contained a product called Germany Bull.

The item was referred to Medsafe – which has staff stationed at the APC. Testing confirmed it contained sildenafil, the active ingredient in Viagra. This unregulated drug can be risky, especially for people with heart conditions, and it can react badly with some medications.

Zulu is an older x ray unit from the former International Mail Centre. It’s used for mail that can’t go through the three machines that are integrated into the automated processing system at the APC. Officers view the images directly at the machine rather than through the control room.



Fruit fly mission

Our officers have once again been out in the community to spread the word about movement controls on vegetables and whole fruit.

This action follows the detection of four Oriental fruit flies in surveillance traps in the Auckland suburb of Papatoetoe in late February and early March.

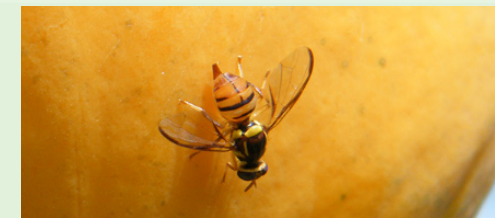
As with previous fruit fly detections, and as a precautionary measure, we have introduced enhanced biosecurity measures for passengers at Auckland Airport. This includes detector dog screening at x ray and at baggage carousels for travellers arriving from countries with Oriental fruit fly.

We have also been closely examining all fruit fly host material we seize from passengers and, where possible, doing the same for items collected from airport amnesty bins.

Oriental fruit fly is widespread in Africa and Asia. In Oceania, it is present in Christmas Island, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Hawaii, and Tahiti, affecting more than 300 hosts, including apple, kiwifruit, citrus, and tomatoes.

Adult flies lay eggs in fruit. The maggots feed inside the fruit, causing it to rot and become unmarketable.

Further information about this incursion response is available on the [Biosecurity New Zealand website](#).



Delivering fruit fly information to homes in Papatoetoe.

Pilot patrol

Detector dog Sophie had airline pilots on her sniffing radar in February.

Three pilots arriving at Auckland Airport ended up with infringement notices thanks to Sophie’s sniffing skills – two from the United States and one from Australia.

One had half a kilo of “leftover dinner”, a completely raw veg salad made from broccoli, kale, onion, capsicum and other ingredients.

The other two were found with a banana and a chicken sandwich.



Bat from Belgium



Our Whangārei office was recently alerted to a dead bat found in kiln-dried timber from Belgium.

The bat was stuck to the side of a shipment at a local timber yard, an approved transitional facility.

A worker handed the bat to a local officer who arrived shortly after the call. The officer was pleased to learn the worker had used gloves to remove the specimen – bats can carry viruses, bacteria, and fungi that can cause disease in humans, including rabies, Ebola, Marburg virus, and coronaviruses.

The officer also used appropriate protective gear when transporting the bat back to the office, where it was photographed and then disposed of in a quarantine bin.

The importer has a strong history of reporting biosecurity risks. A few years ago, they reported a dead monkey in timber from South America.

Haul out reveals biofouling

Great work by our target evaluation team and Northland officers resulted in the detection of significant biofouling on a recreational vessel hauled out for inspection in Whangarei.

The vessel recently arrived in New Zealand from Australia under a Notice of Direction to provide proof within 24 hours that it had a clean hull. The vessel had been unable to provide video evidence prior to arrival due to technical difficulties with dive footage from Australia.

During the inspection, officers found notable fouling on the hull, including live mussels tucked inside an inlet pipe.

After cleaning, the vessel received full biosecurity clearance.



Misplaced trust

A South African couple living in Southland recently arrived at Queenstown Airport's inspection bench with a bag of declared plant products.

The wife was confident everything would sail through — after all, she'd checked with an AI chatbot, which assured her the items were fine to bring into New Zealand.

Her husband, however, was certain they wouldn't comply.

He was right. All the items were seized and destroyed.

The lesson? Check official sources before bringing risk items into New Zealand.



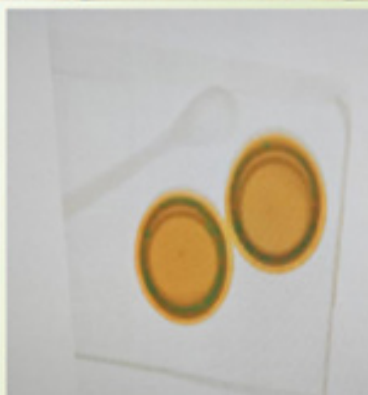
Turtle shells seized

A routine inspection of unaccompanied personal effects in Tauranga led to the discovery of five loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) shells.

Loggerhead turtles are a protected species, and their shells fall under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) Appendix I – the highest level of international protection. This means trade is strictly prohibited unless the importer holds the appropriate permits, which they didn't in this case.

The shells were referred to the Department of Conservation team in Auckland.

“Mad” honey



Real Mad Honey – it has a catchy name, but it’s not permitted to enter New Zealand.

As readers of **The Border Space** will know, there are strict controls on the importation of honey due to the biosecurity risks it poses to bees and the local honey industry.

At the time of writing, we have detected three parcels containing this product through X ray screening of international mail. Although the parcels were sent from the Netherlands, the labelling states the honey is sourced from Nepal.

Alongside the biosecurity risk, there are also food safety concerns. This honey contains grayanotoxin, a neurotoxin.

As with all non-compliant honey imports, our rules are very clear – the product must be reshipped out of New Zealand or destroyed.



Pork off the menu

Detector dog Klaus has had a busy few weeks at Auckland Airport.

Significant interceptions included a large undeclared 700g pork salami, along with 1.2kg of cooked pork cutlets in checked in baggage. The passenger had arrived from the Czech Republic on Qatar Airways.

Pork was very much on the passenger’s menu – two pork sandwiches were also found in a backpack, resulting in a \$400 fine.

Another traveller arriving from the United States was also fined after Klaus sniffed out a bag full of undeclared food, including a 30g pork salami, 82g of fresh salad, a 98g lemon, and a bag of guavas (354g).

Go Klaus!



Dengue fever alert

We’ve ramped up checks for flights and air cargo arriving from the Cook Islands following a dengue fever outbreak.

This includes additional bioassay checks on aircraft, which use cages of live flies to confirm that insecticide levels meet “disinsection” requirements. We are also carrying out inspections of air containers for mosquitoes and doing targeted checks of transitional facilities that receive goods from the Cook Islands.

Dengue fever is transmitted primarily by infected mosquitos, specifically the Aedes species.



Compliance monitoring underway

Passenger compliance monitoring for 2025/2026 is well underway.

The monitoring is carried out to provide assurance that our biosecurity controls for arriving air passengers are effective in managing risk.

To date, over 8000 passengers have been randomly selected for these additional checks across airports in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown, with their carry on and checked luggage thoroughly searched.

Previous results have shown consistently high levels of compliance. The compliance rate for 2024/2025 was 98.94%, exceeding our target of 98.5%.

The 2025/2026 compliance monitoring results are expected to be available around July.

Scout stampede

A sudden influx of 500 Scouts saw all biosecurity hands to the pump at Wellington Airport to check tents and other camping gear.

Arriving for the 16th Aotearoa Jamboree, held in January, the Scouts – mostly from Australia – were spread across two charter flights and several commercial ones.

Thankfully, most of the gear was clean, reducing clearance delays. Interceptions were limited to a scattering of dried plant material and the odd seed caught in a seam.



Return to sender

We've been working with NZ Post to reship falsely declared seeds back to their supplier in Spain.

The seeds – which are prohibited under biosecurity rules – have been detected in large quantities at the Auckland Processing Centre. They are often declared as clothing and sometimes hidden between legitimately declared items.

The plan is to return the seeds using a Universal Postal Union (UPU) process that requires the postal service of origin to pay for the shipping. This means neither Biosecurity New Zealand nor NZ Post covers the destruction costs. It's then up to the supplier to deal with customers who haven't received their goods – not us or NZ Post.

We've done this before with an exporter in China who was mailing seeds to New Zealand customers. We worked with NZ Post to alert their postal counterpart that they were sending non-compliant mail.

The UPU coordinates international postal policies and sets the rules for mail exchanges between member countries.



Border activity for January and February 2026

	January 2025	January 2026	February 2025	February 2026
Passenger				
Total arrivals	702,288	736,243	555,846	603,415
NZ/Australia	395,480	413,555	268,021	269,075
Rest of world	306,808	322,688	287,825	334,340
Risk items seized	11,195	11,135	9,091	8,826
Risk items treated or destroyed*	7,375	10,547	6,177	8,389
Infringement notices	951	993	782	831
Mail				
Mail items screened	902,545	924,994	799,281	848,763
Mail items requiring further inspection	1,242	3,281	1,491	4,386
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	183	239	142	89**
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	57,983	66,681	57,901	63,363
Sea containers inspected	3,315	3,031	3,686	3,553
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	35,332	33,735	31,812	39,594
Cargo lines inspected	4,907	5,162	4,656	4,914
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed***	1,014	1,156	1,189	1,073

*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



Mike Inglis
Commissioner, North
Biosecurity New Zealand



Andrew Spelman
Commissioner, Biosecurity Intelligence
and Systems, Biosecurity New Zealand



Diane McDermott
Commissioner, Central/South
Biosecurity New Zealand

Sign up to

New Zealand's most
popular border
biosecurity publication.