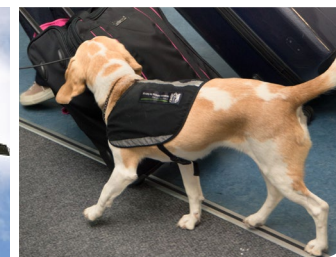




Biosecurity New Zealand
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

The BorderSpace

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



Issue 43 | February 2022

New canine recruits

A big warm welcome to the latest litter from our detector dog breeding programme – P litter.

On 24 November, working dog Huia gave birth to nine beagle pups (five girls, four boys) within four and a half hours and unassisted – super mum!

As is our custom, all names of the pups start with the initial of the litter – in this case, “P”. The names are Pippa, Polly, Pixie, Peggy, Pete, Pedro, Pluto, Padma and Pilot. Pilot was the winning entry from a Facebook competition to name the last male pup.

Before starting training, the tiny new recruits will be fostered out to families for the first 14 months of their lives. Some of the pups may not make the grade – it takes some special sniffing skills to become a biosecurity detector dog.

We have started interviewing potential foster families but are still looking for more. Check out our [website](#) for the requirements and application processes.

Our Detector Dog Programme has been running for 25 years. We have produced 39 beagle and beagle/harrier cross litters. There have also been five litters from other dog breeds.



Huia and her new litter.



Pilot's name was the winner of a Facebook competition.



New biosecurity sniffer Pippa.



Padma takes it easy.



The P-litter in January.

Passenger biosecurity back in the spotlight

Strong biosecurity defences will be in place at airports when international travel ramps up.

Under current plans, we expect to see a phased reopening. Starting later this month, vaccinated Kiwis and critical workers from Australia will be the first travellers to bypass managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ).

We are well prepared for any volume surges as borders reopen further for New Zealand travellers from other countries and foreign nationals. Staff working on rotation across the cargo, mail and passenger pathways will provide support as needed.

We can also draw upon officers who have been temporarily seconded to other parts of MPI or have opted for special leave arrangements during the lull in passenger activity.

We have also recently recruited more frontline officers for Wellington and Queenstown, which have been closed for international travel for most of the pandemic. The 16 officers (eight for each location) graduated from their training in December. Recruitment is underway for 15 new officers in Auckland. We are very mindful that travellers are likely to face additional public health checks at the airport and want to ensure our processes are as streamlined as possible.

Detector dog teams will be reappearing at regional airports. During the height of the pandemic, we kennelled all our dogs in Auckland. They were re-introduced at Auckland Airport for quarantine-free travellers in April last year. Dog teams have also been undertaking cargo duties.

We are currently on the hunt for six to eight new handlers to operate in Auckland. The positions have been advertised to existing officers, but we will look outside Biosecurity NZ if necessary. The

new appointments will put us in good stead to meet future operating requirements.

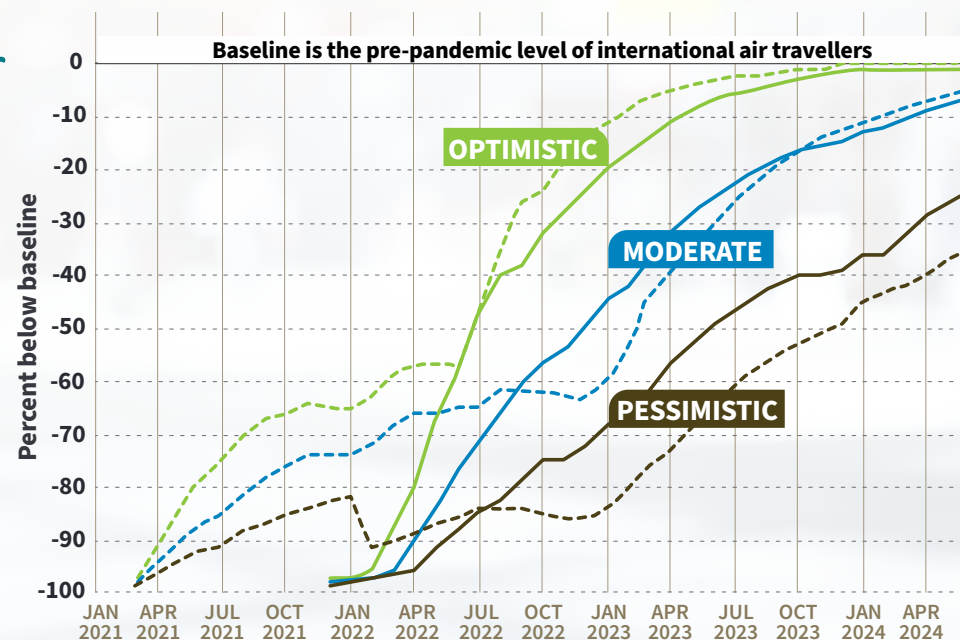
We are also considering contingency options should Omicron reduce the number of officers we can front at international airports. Options include re-introducing “green lane” clearance. This would see selected low-risk passengers avoid x-ray screening (they would continue to face scrutiny from detector dogs and officers). We would also actively encourage all arriving passengers to refrain from carrying food or used equipment to reduce the chance of clearance delays.



The most optimistic predictions see international travel retuning to pre-pandemic levels in early 2024. There may well be fits and starts as health and immigration authorities continue to make hard public health calls.

In this environment, our goal is to remain flexible as possible. The recent reorganisation of our border clearance services under the Strengthening Biosecurity in a Changing World programme (see previous issue of [The Border Space](#)) has laid the groundwork for this.

Predictions for international passenger growth



Biosecurity reminder for air passengers

A new public awareness campaign will remind arriving passengers of their biosecurity responsibilities when New Zealand's borders reopen.

We're targeting Kiwis returning from Australia in the first instance. They will be the first travellers allowed MIQ-free travel under current plans.

Our research shows this group is already very clued up about biosecurity and supportive of the need to protect New Zealand. They are more likely to carry a biosecurity item (such as fruit) by accident than ignorance.

With this in mind, our new campaign will be a reminder to travellers to stay vigilant in order to avoid paying a \$400 fine.

Our marketing material will emphasise that travellers can save paying the fine if they check their baggage for risk items. We used similar messaging successfully during the Trans-Tasman travel bubble last year, asking passengers to spend 30 seconds checking their bags to save \$400.

The latest campaign simplifies this reminder by removing the

reference to how long you should spend checking.

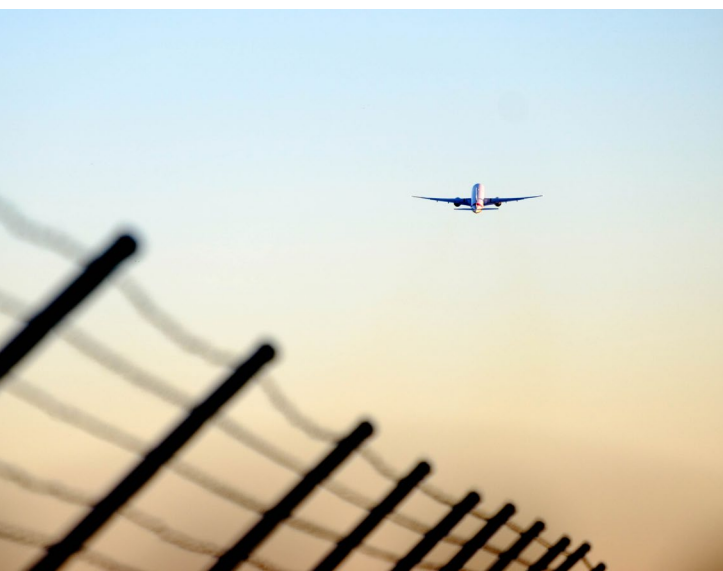
We spent a lot of time finetuning the images. Signage at Australian airports will feature a travel satchel and fruit. Kiwis arriving from Australia are more likely to use carry-on than checked-in baggage. Fruit is the biosecurity risk item they are most likely to carry.

The approach will be extended to Kiwi travellers arriving from other countries as borders open further.

We will still have strong messaging in place on arrival in New Zealand making it very clear passengers will be fined if they fail to declare risk goods.

We have another campaign ready to go for higher risk travellers such as foreign nationals arriving from China and India. The messaging will be a lot more direct and authoritative. See alongside for what we are planning for visitors from China.

Below: A friendly reminder to travellers arriving from Australia. The final artwork will feature fruit and a travel satchel.



Strong message works best for travellers from China

Travellers from China are likely to be alerted the New Zealand Government demands passengers to dispose or declare all risk items.

The no-nonsense message is the result of extensive testing in China prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be the basis of a new campaign covering airport signage, digital ads, and other marketing material when New Zealand borders open to all international arrivals.

A research company checked out a range of ideas with locals in Guangzhou, China, in 2019. The study revealed that Chinese travellers weren't very interested in knowing why New Zealand has biosecurity rules. It was more important that the message to comply was serious and authoritative.

Various design concepts were tested with focus groups in China, including details such as colour and images.

There have been no decisions on the final artwork, but the leading contender features New Zealand and China flags (see draft below). It reads: "The New Zealand Government requires you to declare all food and herbal medicines on your arrival card. There's a NZ\$400 fine if you don't."

Strong biosecurity message appeals to travellers from China. A draft of what the new campaign may look like.



Airport automation still the goal

We will be using tried and trusted manual risk assessment methods when travel restrictions ease. However, our goal remains to automate and digitise this process under the Airports of the Future programme.

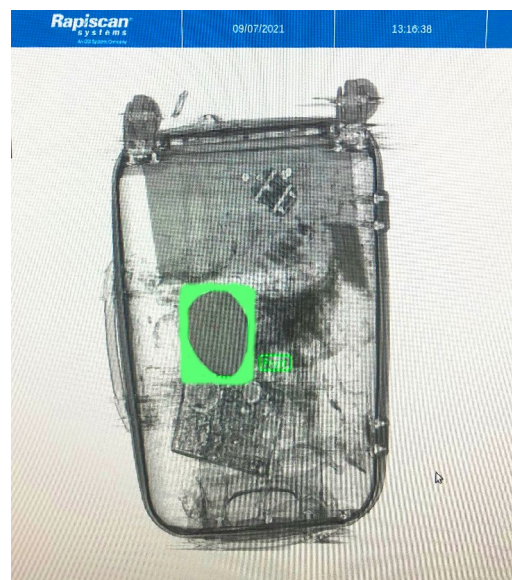
Regular readers of **The Border Space** will be aware of our trials with computer tomography (CT) scanning technology. We already have two scanners in place at Auckland Airport to detect risk goods in passenger baggage. We're also planning to trial the technology at Auckland's International Mail Centre in coming months.

Eventually replacing traditional x-ray screening, CT allows faster processing speeds and provides 3D images, making it easier for operators to spot biosecurity threats. The technology is more than twice as good at spotting risk materials than 2D x-ray machines. It also allows automatic detection of threats. We are working with our Australian counterparts to develop algorithms to detect items such as fruit, meat and wooden products.

The impact of COVID-19 has pushed the deadline out for completion of the algorithm project. However, there will be further steps towards automation over the coming months. We have a dedicated team doing as many trials as possible with the trickle of international passengers currently crossing the border.

Upcoming work includes trialling electronic baggage tags. The tags allow officers in a control room to match bags with images from the new scanners. They enable any baggage identified as containing potential risk items to be pulled aside for scrutiny. This will reduce the need to manually assess every arriving passenger, allowing officers to focus their efforts on the highest risk.

The approach also has benefits for travellers. Those who are compliant with our rules will find the biosecurity clearance process dead easy. Following baggage screening, they will grab their belongings from the airport carousel and walk out through controlled gates.



Stink bugs probe border defences

Brown marmorated stink bugs (BMSB) are continuing to probe our border defences as the season passes the halfway mark.

So far this season (1 September to 30 April), there been 59 live interceptions. Last season, there were 46 live interceptions in the same period.

We are monitoring the situation closely. Where required, we have placed targeted alerts on goods from importers associated with BMSB interceptions. Consignments covered by the alerts undergo full inspection to rule out the presence of live BMSB.

Live interceptions to date include:

- **2** live bugs from air passengers staying in a MIQ facility. A passenger arriving from France found a bug in her luggage during her stay. Another passenger from the United States found the pest while unpacking back at home. We have since provided the MIQ facility in question with extra educational material about BMSB and their biosecurity threat.
- **1** live female in a consignment of cat litter paper from China. The detection was made at an Auckland transitional facility.
- **10** live bugs aboard a vehicle carrier. The crew handed the BMSB (along with **117** dead ones) to our officers on arrival in Auckland.
- **3** live bugs (two female, one male) in a courier parcel from the United States. The notifier was directed to freeze and package and send the dead bugs to our lab for identification. No further bugs were found on the premises.
- **6** live bugs in separate air freight consignments from Italy unloaded in Foxton. The consignments contained new vehicle and agricultural parts. No further bugs were found following fumigation and thorough inspection of the parts, packaging and surrounding area.



- **2** live females in a vehicle from a carrier that had transited through the United States. An Auckland stevedore detected the bugs aboard the vessel, which had earlier reported BMSB on the voyage. An officer detected a male BMSB in a second vehicle, which underwent treatment.
- **2** bugs (one female, one male) in a consignment of metal fencing from China. An Auckland transitional facility staff member detected the bugs.

Stink bug assurance

We recently mapped out the border controls in place to manage the biosecurity threat posed by brown marmorated stink bug.

Readers of **The Border Space** will be aware that stopping BMSB from establishing in New Zealand is a top priority for Biosecurity NZ. Established in more than 30 countries, the pest is a voracious feeder of fresh produce and likes to invade household dwellings during the winter.

The exercise was intended to provide assurance that we have appropriate controls in place as cargo travels through supply chains. BMSB is a challenging pest for border officials, given its tendency to hide in hard-to-see places in imported cargo.

Over the last five BMSB seasons we have refined our border measures as part of a continuous improvement approach. Among other things, there have been tweaks to verification and inspection procedures. There has also been a focus on ensuring compliance with directions placed on cargo. And we have put a lot of effort into reporting and monitoring to allow us to target risk.

...continued overleaf

59

**LIVE BUG
INTERCEPTIONS
SO FAR THIS YEAR
(6 FEBRUARY 2022)**

continued from previous page...

The exercise showed we have a comprehensive range of border measures in place to manage the risk. It also highlighted the importance of industry in providing additional confidence that cargo is free of pests or alerting us of potential issues.

Many shipping lines are helping mitigate risk by fumigating cargo during transit, carrying out their own inspections, checking goods have undergone appropriate offshore treatment and providing alerts to our officers. Information regarding BMSB detections by crew during transit enables us to determine risk ratings for arriving vessels and tailor our interventions as appropriate.

A recent detection of 170 live BMSB aboard a vehicle carrier loaded in the United States is a good example of the partnership in action. Following detection of the bugs, the vessel operator decided to discharge the contaminated equipment in Jamaica so it could be sent back to the United States for treatment. This meant the risk was addressed before arriving in New Zealand. The vessel unloaded in Auckland without any further detections or delay.

The example illustrates our shared responsibility to keep BMSB out of New Zealand. It also shows just how far things have moved on (in a good way) since 2018, which saw a number of heavily contaminated vessels directed to leave New Zealand waters.



Stopping the BMSB invaders – addressing the critical risks

Some of the risks

- Cargo does not comply with import rules (e.g. treatment) prior to loading
- Inaccurate or fraudulent cargo documentation
- Release of cargo prior to authorisation from Biosecurity NZ
- Cargo not securely stored or transported
- Failure to notify Biosecurity NZ about contamination

Mitigating the risk (assurance activities)

- Inspection and verification by quarantine officers
- Inspections at transitional facilities by accredited staff
- Container audits
- Cargo reconciliation process (checking that directions have been actioned)
- Monitoring and reporting, including strict reporting requirements for transitional facilities
- Auditing of transitional facilities and ports that receive imported cargo
- Training and competency requirements for officers
- Certification and training for transitional facility operators and accredited staff
- Determining industry best practice
- Biosecurity vigilance among all supply chain participants.

Hubbing sites grow

Congratulations to all transport operators and transitional facilities (TFs) that are now compliant with “hubbing” requirements.

At the time of writing, 58 approved TFs have registered for general authorisation as hubbing sites. These locations can now provide temporary storage when transporters are unable to take sea containers directly to the facility nominated in clearance instructions. Three brand new TFs have also registered for the sole purpose of hubbing.

Intended to stop illegal movement and storage of shipping containers, the new requirements came into force on 1 September. Containers can only be hubbed at authorised locations.

Use of authorised sites helps us to track movement of risk goods and gives us peace of mind that appropriate biosecurity measures are in place. Authorisation also removes the legal uncertainty about hubbing. In the past, the practice was technically a breach of the Biosecurity Act, even if it involved use of an approved TF.

In response to requests from transporters, we are looking to publish a list of authorised sites.

A note of caution for any of you who are still using unauthorised sites for temporary container storage. We follow up any alert we receive from either the public or our officers. We already have a number of non-compliant transport operators in our sights. Offenders should expect strong enforcement action.

Please **contact a local Biosecurity NZ office** if you need any assistance to get approval for a hubbing site.

Currently

58 TRANSITIONAL FACILITIES
REGISTERED AS HUBBING SITES

These TFs provide temporary storage when sea containers are unable to be taken directly to the nominated facility.

TF verification field trials begin

We have begun to audit the first transitional facilities (TFs) under our new performance-based verification (PBV).

As regular readers of **The Border Space** will be aware, we are moving from a one-size-fits-all inspection approach for TFs to auditing performance. This will see each facility ranked as acceptable or unacceptable in meeting their biosecurity responsibilities.

A selection of more than 20 TFs from Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch have already provided feedback on a new reporting template for recording audit results. This has been reviewed and some minor adjustments made.

Field trials of the reporting approach have begun and are scheduled to be completed by the end of February. Reporting for now will be paper-based. However, our plan is still to introduce an electronic reporting tool that will remove the need for physical documents.

Starting with a small team of specialists, we plan to introduce a training programme in March for officers who will undertake audits.

Depending on what happens with the latest COVID-19 outbreak, we are keen to introduce PBV nationwide by early May.

As always, watch this (border) space for further updates.



Tough on reporting failures

The gentle approach to enforcing sea container reporting by transitional facilities (TF) is over.

TFs have been required to report on all containers that enter their premises since July last year, which allows us to keep tabs on the whereabouts of potential biosecurity threats.

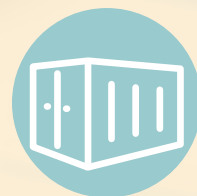
We believe that's enough time to get the new approach bedded in. Officers are now likely to issue fines and corrective action notices for unauthorised container movements and reporting failures.

In terms of infringement notices, our Christchurch officers are leading the clampdown, having issued five fines to local facilities at the time of writing. Over the last three months, Auckland officers sent out 47 corrective action reports and two educational letters.

Under regulations introduced in 2018, officers can fine TFs for a range of offences that would have required prosecution in the past. The fines are \$400 for individuals and \$800 for "corporations".

Biosecurity NZ firmly believes TFs and their staff should be held accountable if they fail to deliver on their biosecurity responsibilities.

We want to acknowledge most facilities take their reporting responsibilities seriously. Our officers will continue to provide support to any TFs struggling to comply with the new requirements.



CONTAINER REPORTING

Loaded containers ~90%

Empty containers ~50%



TFs required to report on all containers entering their premises since July 2021



From the frontline

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

Chime wave

There might be something lost in translation, but this dried plant material doesn't appear to be a dried wind chime, despite being declared as such.

Officers at the International Mail Centre have seized a number of these non-chiming biosecurity items in recent months.



Feathery find

Detector dog Klaus sniffed out these fake feathery ducklings in a parcel at the International Mail Centre in January.

An x-ray image showed them to contain polystyrene and wire, not flesh and bone.

The importer was well known to our officers as a regular importer of animal ornaments. The ducks were correctly declared and arrived with appropriate import documents, allowing them to be quickly released.



What not to do as civilisation collapses

A biosecurity faux pas has put the brakes on imports of a popular card game from the United States.

The manufacturers of the Climate Catastrophe Pack decided to include a bag of seeds as part of the promotion. According to the website, "the pack includes thousands of three seeds you can plant to assuage your feelings of

powerlessness while civilization collapses around you."

Unfortunately, the seeds are not compliant with biosecurity requirements, so need to be destroyed if they come into the country.

Our officers at the International Mail Centre are on alert for the packs, which arrive in plain white envelopes.

Biosecurity NZ's incursion investigation team has also contacted the supplier, who has agreed to stop sending the packs to New Zealand. The team is also chasing up any New Zealand buyers who may have received the product.

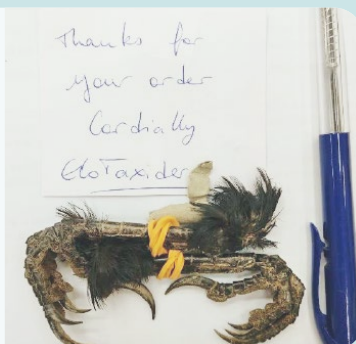


Fail for French crow's feet

It wasn't a lucky day for the importer of taxidermised crow's feet from France.

Officers at the International Mail Centre intercepted the grisly good luck charm in a package from France in January.

The declaration was fine, but the feet hadn't been properly processed. The importer was offered the options of treatment, reshipment or destruction.

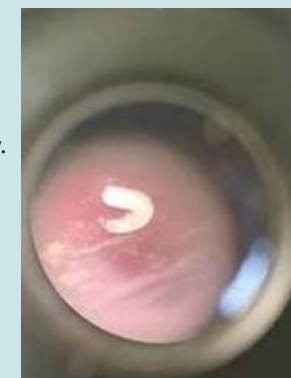


Fruit fly in Aussie lychees

Two Auckland officers made the first fruit fly border detection of 2022 when they spotted live larvae and eggs in a consignment of lychees from Australia on 31 January.

Thankfully, the consignment had undergone offshore irradiation treatment, rendering the fruit fly sterile and allowing the consignment to be cleared. Nevertheless, it was great spotting by the duo.

The eggs and larvae were later identified as Queensland fruit fly, one of the most destructive fruit fly species.



Health and safety update

The new year is shaping up to be another big one for health and safety, both for our own officers and the industry players who carry out biosecurity duties.

More than biosecurity

Our regulations team is looking at how health and safety requirements can be incorporated into existing biosecurity requirements for treatment providers and facilities. This is a big job. It covers a range of standards, guidance documents and codes of practice. Industry and WorkSafe will be heavily involved in the discussions.

The work recognises the need to find the right balance between protecting New Zealand from pests and diseases and ensuring everyone involved in biosecurity is safe on the job.

We plan to see initial progress on this programme by mid-July.

Partnership with TFs

We will continue partnering with transitional facilities on operational safety improvements in 2022. In 2021, officers reported nearly 270 health and safety incidents or near misses at facilities. There were 260 incidents or near misses at ports. Officers worked closely with port and facility staff to address issues and make improvements.

Infection control

With COVID-19 making headlines again, it's worth pointing out our officers are fully vaccinated and subject to regular surveillance testing. They are also well versed in PPE requirements and other infection control measures.

Our frontline workforce is also well on track to receive vaccine booster shots by 15 February – the deadline under the latest public health order. More than 90% of the 310 officers requiring the booster have received shots at the time of writing.

Table grape fumigant safety

We have been taking a hard look at the use of sulphur dioxide with imported table grapes.

Consignments are fumigated with a mixture of sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide. The packaging may undergo similar fumigation, or the goods may be packed with slow-release fumigant pads (see picture).

We recommend transitional facility staff check with the importer on measures to mitigate risk. Our preference is for the importer to include a safety data sheet so anyone working with consignments knows how to minimise any exposure.

We have alerted officers about a range of safety measures, including ensuring product is vented continuously for at least two hours prior to inspection and using gas detection units to measure fumigant levels.

Sulphur dioxide can irritate the eyes, nose and throat and cause asthma symptoms. High levels of exposure can be life threatening. It has a pungent, irritating odour like a just-struck match.

Slow-release fumigation pads can be included with grape consignments.



Border activity for November/December 2021

	Nov-20	Nov-21	Dec-20	Dec-21
Passenger				
Total arrivals	11,762	12,075	12,785	15,030
NZ/Australia	8,379	6,645	8,994	9,681
Rest of world	3,383	5,430	3,791	5,349
Risk items seized	260	202	242	248
Risk items treated or destroyed	260	194	238	241
Infringement notices	8	14	11	9
Mail				
Mail items screened	1,786,780	1,663,570	2,366,308	2,386,522
Mail items requiring further inspection	4,397	3,583	5,057	3,949
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	947	773	895	924
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	65,861	67,795	74,787	65,900
Sea containers inspected	3,331	2,223	3,903	2,899
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	23,083	23,166	23,681	22,530
Cargo lines inspected	7,078	6,611	7,226	6,131
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	1,598	1,546	1,899	1,676



Steve Gilbert
Central/South Regional Commissioner
Biosecurity New Zealand



Mike Inglis
Northern Regional Commissioner
Biosecurity New Zealand