

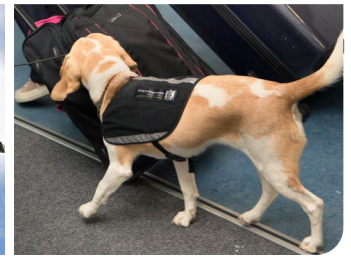


Biosecurity New Zealand

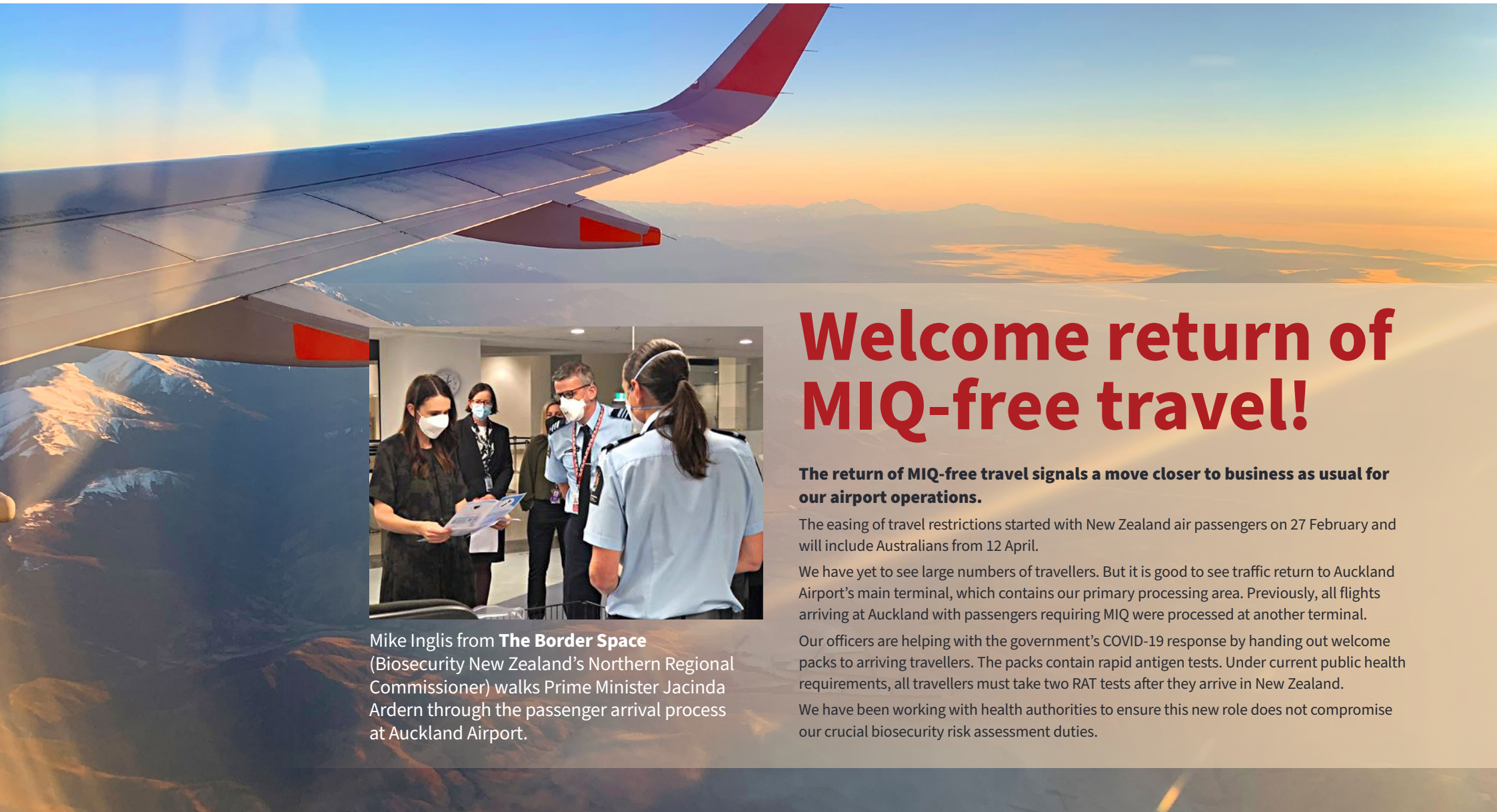
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

The BorderSpace

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



Issue 44 | April 2022



Welcome return of MIQ-free travel!

The return of MIQ-free travel signals a move closer to business as usual for our airport operations.

The easing of travel restrictions started with New Zealand air passengers on 27 February and will include Australians from 12 April.

We have yet to see large numbers of travellers. But it is good to see traffic return to Auckland Airport's main terminal, which contains our primary processing area. Previously, all flights arriving at Auckland with passengers requiring MIQ were processed at another terminal.

Our officers are helping with the government's COVID-19 response by handing out welcome packs to arriving travellers. The packs contain rapid antigen tests. Under current public health requirements, all travellers must take two RAT tests after they arrive in New Zealand.

We have been working with health authorities to ensure this new role does not compromise our crucial biosecurity risk assessment duties.

Mike Inglis from **The Border Space** (Biosecurity New Zealand's Northern Regional Commissioner) walks Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern through the passenger arrival process at Auckland Airport.

Passenger pathway protection

International airports are reopening to travellers, which means increased biosecurity risk from this pathway.

As in the past, we will continue to take a multi-layered approach to protect New Zealand from biosecurity threats. Here is a quick refresher on some of the main ways we do this in the passenger pathway.

Passenger arrival card

The arrival card is used to identify risk goods of interest. It is a legal declaration that all passengers must complete when entering New Zealand. It is designed to obtain as much relevant information as possible from arriving passengers to support risk assessment decisions by officers.

Public awareness

Biosecurity NZ runs public awareness campaigns to educate passengers about the requirement to declare or dispose of risk goods on arrival, or to leave them behind. This includes advertising overseas to high-risk passengers, and biosecurity information supplied with entry visas. Also, an [inflight video](#) provides biosecurity information to passengers during travel. The video is available in many languages, including Chinese and Hindi.

Risk assessment

Risk assessment is the most important part of passenger clearance. It acts as a filter for identifying passengers likely to carry biosecurity items. Officers assess each arriving



passenger for risk. Each passenger is then directed to further checks depending on the level of risk they pose. High-risk passengers may be directed to have their baggage physically inspected at a search bench.

The assessment involves a visual appraisal of the passenger and their luggage. The assessor also reviews the passenger's arrival card, asks questions relating to biosecurity risk and may do a check of any declared items. Officers also receive alerts about passengers who may be more likely to carry risk goods.

X-ray screening

All passenger baggage is currently subject to x-ray screening to detect potential biosecurity threats. We operate 23 traditional 2D x-ray machines in international airports and have some 150 trained operators. We are also trialling two 3D scanners at Auckland Airport. The technology is more than twice as effective at detecting threats than x-ray machines. One of the machines is dedicated to hand baggage, which is more likely to contain fly-host material than checked-in items.

Detector dogs

Specialising in detecting meat, vegetables, seeds and other plant material, detector dog teams can pick up threats that are harder to detect with x-ray screening. Their visual presence also provides significant deterrence for travellers carrying risk items. In the passenger pathway, detector dog teams are largely used to verify the risk assessment decisions made by biosecurity officers.

Due to the low volume of arriving passengers, our dogs have been kennelled in Auckland for most of the pandemic. With the recent easing of travel restrictions, we now have teams rostered on at the international airports in Auckland and Christchurch. We are planning to reintroduce dogs to other regions as they open for international travel.

Amnesty bins

Amnesty bins are in place at airports for passengers to dispose of risk goods. Signage and public announcements in the airports reinforce this message.

Disinsection

All arriving international aircraft must be treated to ensure they do not bring harmful insects into New Zealand.

Designated places of first arrival

All international air passengers must arrive in New Zealand at a designated place of first arrival. These locations have audited procedures to manage biosecurity risks.

Compliance survey

We survey passengers to measure their compliance once they have been through biosecurity checks at the airport. This involves an intensive check of all baggage from random passengers after they have been through the arrival process. The last survey, in 2018, showed 98.7% of air passengers were free of risk goods. The target is 98.5%. Further surveying of this pathway has been on hold since the beginning of the pandemic. We expect it to resume later this year.

CHECK YOUR BAG FOR FRUIT



SAVE \$400

Cruise ships on the radar

Cruise ship biosecurity is very much on our radar with maritime borders likely to reopen later this year.

There is a good chance foreign cruise ships could start arriving in New Zealand again from October. With this in mind, we have started talking with cruise lines about biosecurity requirements, particularly the existing accreditation programme.

We've been looking at how to make the evaluation and auditing aspects of the programme more robust. To that end, we're on track to adopt a quality management approach that meets international best practice for inspection activities (ISO-17020).

The cruise ship accreditation programme has been in place since 2016 to provide assurance that departing passengers and crew pose low-biosecurity risk.

Accredited vessels source fresh produce and other food from reputable suppliers, reducing biosecurity risk. They also take an active role in educating passengers about biosecurity before port visits.

The quality management approach will standardise how the programme operates across the industry, providing additional assurance that everything is working as it should.

As part of the approach, we will provide clear advice to industry on how our auditing will be carried out, including what we will look at and what information vessel operators will need to provide.

Changes to the accreditation programme aside, we expect cruise biosecurity will look very familiar when vessels return. Our officers will continue to have a strong presence at ports, especially at locations where cruise ships first make landfall in New Zealand.

Vessels will also continue to be subject to strict biofouling requirements, including providing evidence of hull cleanliness before arrival.

Cruise ship accreditation in brief

- The programme gives Biosecurity NZ confidence that passengers from accredited vessels pose very low biosecurity risk.
- More than 95% of cruise ships visiting New Zealand are accredited.
- Fresh produce and other food on vessels are assessed to ensure they meet strict biosecurity standards.
- Vessels provide additional biosecurity education to passengers before landing in New Zealand.
- Departing passengers are less likely to carry risk goods (compliance has risen from 97% to 99% since the introduction of the programme).
- The scheme has positive benefits for passengers, who are often able to disembark quicker from accredited vessels than non-accredited vessels.

More than 95%
of cruise ships visiting
New Zealand are accredited
under our cruise ship
accreditation programme

Lifting cargo biosecurity

We are keen to help the cargo industry lift its biosecurity game.

This means providing leadership, support and initiatives that improve biosecurity, such as the work under our sea cargo programme. It also includes using enforcement when we must.



Faced with ongoing compliance issues, we want to signal our readiness to consider stronger forms of enforcement for obvious breaches.

Our compliance people are currently pursuing prosecution for some 30 cases involving transitional facilities. The offences include:

- Moving uncleared goods to areas outside approved holding areas. In some instances, this has involved storing uncleared goods next to cleared items.
- Releasing uncleared goods without authorisation.
- Storing uncleared risk goods (such as fresh produce and nursery stock) in insecure locations.
- Use of untrained staff to clear goods.
- Importation and distribution of undeclared (or incorrectly declared) goods.

Some of the cases involve reoccurring systemic failure.

Officers are also investigating other potential offences. For example, we are looking at 56 instances where transport operators may have dropped containers at unauthorised sites. And we are continuing to chase up facilities for reporting failures.

It is worth pointing out that importers are ultimately responsible for knowing what they bring into New Zealand and providing appropriate evidence to support declarations.

As an aside, we are currently looking at registering agents as a way of ensuring importers meet these requirements. Registration would likely require biosecurity training and certification.

Biosecurity NZ uses a graduated system to address non-compliance. At the bottom of the scale, officers can issue education letters and corrective reports that note where improvements can be made. Moving up a notch, officers now have power to issue infringement notices to TFs for low-level offences.

Officers can also issue compliance orders to individuals and facilities. They usually follow evidence of systemic failure. Prosecution is normally reserved for the most serious offending. Under the Biosecurity Act, facilities and individuals can face a fine of up to \$100,000 or imprisonment up to five years. Corporations can face a fine of up to \$200,000.

TF approval revoked after frog incident

An Auckland transitional facility (TF) had its conditional approval to operate revoked last month after the business owner and an accredited worker decided to throw a frog into nearby bushes.

The frog arrived in a container from China. TF staff should have stored it in a fridge for collection by officers. Instead, they tried to destroy the evidence and pretend it didn't exist.

Another worker at the site (a former "accredited person") alerted Biosecurity NZ. Thankfully, our investigations team was able to determine the frog was already established in New Zealand and did not pose any biosecurity threat.

The whistle blower believed it was important to do the right thing to protect New Zealand. We agree.

The TF in question will not be able to receive any containers until a new operator is confirmed. We are also reviewing the fit and proper status of the accredited person involved in the incident.



BMSB alerts in place

We've been working with our Aussie counterparts to target additional imported goods for greater scrutiny as the 2021/2022 brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) season draws to a close.

Under new alerts, masonry, glass and plastic items, will be among the goods pulled aside for extensive inspection.

The move follows the interception of a heavily contaminated consignment of tiles from China by Australian officials in February.

Any consignments imported to New Zealand by the tile supplier will also receive attention.

We expect the alerts will see targeted inspections of 50 consignments before the end of the season.

The alerts come on top of already established targeting this season of cargo from Schedule 3 countries (identified as high risk for BMSB) and other nations with native BMSB populations.

BMSB treatment approved

Ethyl formate is the latest treatment option to stop brown marmorated stink bug hitchhikers in imported cargo.

Biosecurity NZ's treatments team recently consulted on use of the fumigant as a safe alternative to environmentally unfriendly gases such as methyl bromide.

Treatment rules have now been updated to allow use of ethyl formate in New Zealand with carbon dioxide (CO₂) to kill BMSB in containers, vehicles and equipment. The CO₂ speeds up application and reduces flammability.

Providers can now seek approval from Biosecurity NZ for application procedures. We expect to see the treatment available for the next BMSB season, starting in September.

Ethyl formate is already approved as a surface treatment for

To date, BMSB detections in goods from China remain low.

China is not currently included in the list of countries that are subject to specific BMSB management measures such as treatment of goods prior to shipment.

Biosecurity NZ, however, continues to monitor the biosecurity risk from all countries that have known BMSB populations and is ready to revise import requirements as required.

Biosecurity officials from Australia and New Zealand meet regularly to coordinate measures to combat BMSB. Import requirements are aligned as much as possible, particularly for high-risk cargo such as vehicles, machinery and parts.

Interestingly, a notable point of difference between the two countries is the use of transitional facilities (TFs). TFs ensure all sea cargo arriving in New Zealand undergoes biosecurity scrutiny by trained staff at a secure location. So far this season, accredited TF staff have made nearly half of all BMSB detections. Australia does not operate TFs.

The BMSB season runs from 1 September to 30 April.

spiders in air and sea containers.

The fumigant is likely to be an attractive option for local treatment providers, as use of methyl bromide now requires wide buffer zones to protect the public under new rules from the Environmental Protection Authority.

As a treatment for BMSB, the fumigant is so far only approved to be used in New Zealand in instances where the pest is detected in untreated goods or when there is evidence of offshore treatment failure. We plan to work closely with Australian providers to extend use to offshore treatment providers. We are also looking at use for a wider range of imported goods.

An interesting aspect of ethyl formate treatment is it turns bugs "crispy". This may make it harder to identify if they are dead from the treatment or not.



Call to BMSB action



We've encouraged more New Zealanders than ever before to look out for brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB).

Biosecurity NZ's latest summer campaign ran for 22 weeks, from 23 September to 19 February.

The campaign aimed to increase public awareness of the invasive pest and to inform people what to do if they find one. It focused especially on gardeners and online shoppers using online ads and videos.

The results were better than any of our previous BMSB campaigns, which have been running

since 2014. The ads were displayed 18,087,355 times, giving people several opportunities to view and engage with the messages. There were 68,413 clicks through to **BMSB information on our website**. And there were 375,496 completed views of the **campaign's YouTube videos**. There were particularly high levels of engagement from the targeted audiences.

Readers of **The Border Space** may recall plans to survey the extent of BMSB awareness in the community. This research is now complete. Carried out in October, the survey showed 29% of the general public were aware of BMSB. Awareness was higher than pea weevil (19%) and fall army worm (17%). It was lower than Queensland fruit fly (66%) and gypsy moth (51%), both of which have seen high-profile eradication responses in New Zealand.

Interestingly, the study showed general awareness of BMSB increased to 35% when prompted with an image of the bug.

The research will help shape future BMSB campaigns, starting with another one for the winter. This is when the bug hibernates in enclosed spaces and is most likely to turn up in homes.

Early detection will give us the best chance of eradicating BMSB before it becomes established.

IF YOU FIND A STINK BUG:

Catch it. Don't kill it. Take a photo.

Call us immediately on 0800 80 99 66.

New online reporting tool for pests and diseases

The reopening of borders makes the introduction of a new **online exotic pest and disease reporting tool** very timely.

Biosecurity NZ's phone hotline (**0800 80 99 66**) is still the main reporting channel, but the online tool gives the public another option to alert Biosecurity NZ of potential threats.

The same team that handles phone hotline reports will process alerts submitted online.

Submitters will be directed to the phone hotline for urgent matters, mass mortalities and animal diseases.

report.mpi.govt.nz/pest



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

Biosecurity protects your business, the environment and the economy. Join now: thisisus.nz

Tech support

New and emerging detection technology has huge potential to help protect New Zealand from unwanted pests and diseases. Here is some of what we are working on to support our quarantine officers.

Bug trials expanded

Wider use of the “Bug” as a cargo inspection tool will be trialled shortly.

Resembling a cross between a skateboard and crawly insect, the Hades-5 inspection robot has already proved a helpful inspection tool for new vehicles arriving in Auckland.

Auckland officers have used the Bug’s cameras to inspect nearly 700 new vehicles since 2019. The trials so far suggest the robot provides a safe and effective way to inspect the underside of vehicles that would otherwise require ramping.

Starting in April, the next phase of trials will see testing with used vehicles, heavy machinery and containers. Our colleagues at Australia’s Department of Agriculture and the Environment are taking a lead role in the trials. They were impressed with our prototype and have since purchased five inspection robots of their own.

The Aussie version of the Bug has a different wheel system. The larger wheels are more suited to a range of surfaces. Our prototype uses a roller system that keeps the unit low to the ground and allows it to scuttle sideways when underneath vehicles.

The trials will see the robot get a workout in conditions such as rain and different temperatures. We plan to check manoeuvrability across a range of surfaces, ability to provide clear images in differing conditions and opportunity for further enhancements.

Ultimately, we hope the Bug will allow speedier and safer biosecurity inspections across a wide range of cargo.



The Bug in action in Auckland.



The Aussie version of the Bug.

Airport scanners back in action

Our 3D scanners at Auckland Airport are back in action with real travellers following the return of MIQ-free travel.

The easing of travel restrictions has seen most international flights return to the main terminal area for processing. This has given us the first opportunity to run baggage from actual passengers through our two 3D scanners (which are based in the terminal) since the end of last year’s travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand.

Despite the lack of travellers, the scanners haven’t been inactive. Officers have continued to run trials and gather test data to develop algorithms for automatic detection of risk goods.

We are planning to move the smaller of the two units (the Rapiscan 920 CT) to the entrance of the baggage area later this month. The unit is used for screening hand baggage. The new location will allow us to establish a dedicated processing lane for flights with passengers that travel lightly. This will ease pressure on the main processing area.

In related news, the long-awaited arrival of Australian technicians has enabled us to start trialling use of RFID tags to identify baggage going through the 3D scanners. The tags will allow us to match 3D images with bags remotely from a control room.

A former rest room for our detector dogs will be set up as the control room for the trial.

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3D mail scanner

We're getting close to having a dedicated 3D scanner for mail.

After COVID-19-related shipping delays and issues getting technicians into New Zealand from Australia, the Rapiscan RTT unit is finally in New Zealand.

Starting in May, the machine will undergo trials at the existing International Mail Centre (IMC) in Auckland. It will then move into New Zealand's new Auckland Processing Centre (APC) near Wiri around October.

The APC is due to replace the IMC after construction finishes next year. The plan is for 3D scanning to be a key feature of our international mail operations in the new processing centre. But first we want to confirm how well it can detect seeds and other risk items we regularly intercept in this pathway.

We're feeling optimistic about the technology. We know 3D scanning is two to three times better at detecting certain biosecurity threats than traditional 2D x-ray images.

If all goes well, the new APC could feature multiple 3D scanners (we have budget for four units).

The Aussies already have RTT units running successfully in mail centres in Melbourne and Sydney. They have made good progress

towards developing algorithms to automatically detect biosecurity threats such as meat, seafood, live animals, and plant material.

The data from our own trials will contribute to the joint development of this software. Likewise, we will continue to share developments with the algorithms we are working on to allow automatic detection of threats in the passenger pathway.



The 3D mail scanner operating in Melbourne.



The new APC under construction in Auckland. It will feature 3D scanners to detect biosecurity threats.

Sniffer tools and container cameras

Sniffer tools to detect insects and cameras to screen sea containers for surface contamination are other potential technology breakthroughs to watch out for.

Australian officials have been trialling both technologies for more than a year. The sniffer concept involves RingIR technology initially developed for defence purposes. It uses laser beams to detect vapours. It has already shown promise for detecting fumigants such as methyl bromide in containers. The next step is insect detection. The Aussies are running trials with khapra beetle and brown marmorated stink bug. We understand the technology could be available for use later next year.

The container camera trial could lead to speedier and more accurate six-sided container inspections. The crane-mounted technology has the potential to detect plant material, soil and hitchhiker pests like giant African snail and other contaminants on the external surfaces of containers.

We are obviously watching these developments with interest and have offered help to progress them.



Container camera trials in Australia.

Celebrating New Zealand's biosecurity champions

Biosecurity Minister Damien O'Connor announced the latest winners of the New Zealand Biosecurity Awards on 21 March.

It's the fifth year we have celebrated people and organisations who help protect New Zealand. The only disappointment was we didn't get to have a grand award ceremony this year due to COVID-19 concerns.

There was special praise for Peter Wilkins, winner of the Minister's Biosecurity Award, for his involvement in more than 80 pest incursion responses over 40 years. The award recognises at least 10 years of outstanding contribution to biosecurity.

Xerra Earth Observation Institute was the other big winner, taking home the New Zealand Biosecurity Supreme Award winner for its maritime intelligence project, Starboard. The tool uses data and analytics to assess the biosecurity risk of vessels entering New Zealand waters.

The full list of New Zealand Biosecurity Award winners is available on the [Ko Tātou This Is Us website](#).



Peter Wilkins – winner of the Minister's Biosecurity Award.



Student-lead pest eradication saw Rotorua's Lynmore Primary School pick up the Kura Award.

Single standard proposed for vessel biosecurity

The creation of a single standard for vessel biosecurity should make it easier for the shipping industry to follow the rules.

Biosecurity NZ's Invasive Species Team is working to review and merge the current two craft risk management standards that deal with vessels (CRMS-Biofoul and CRMS-Vessels). The standards separately cover above-water and under-water biosecurity risks.

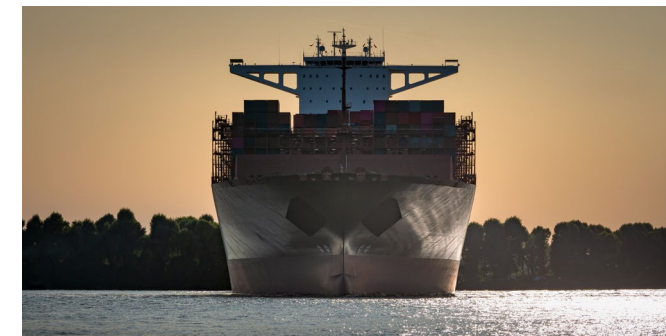
It is expected the merged CRMS will incorporate (by reference) proposed new requirements for underwater vessel inspection providers and biofouling assessment reporting.

These requirements will give greater consistency to reporting, allowing Biosecurity NZ to make prompt and clear decisions on the risk of a vessel. As it stands, varying quality in reporting across industry makes it difficult for our officers to make compliance decisions and accurately manage risk.

Improved reporting will also result in vessel operators making better biofouling management decisions.

The changes will also give the shipping industry certainty around whether their assessment reports will be accepted as evidence of compliance.

There have already been initial discussions with industry about changes. Formal consultation on the proposed new standard is expected to begin shortly.



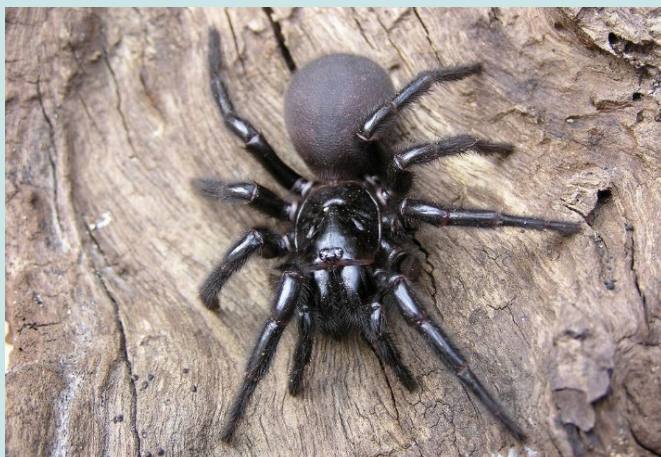
From the frontline

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

Flood warning

We've alerted transitional facility staff to keep their eyes peeled for Aussie hitchhikers in the wake of recent flooding in Queensland and New South Wales.

Unwanted pests such as red imported fire ants and even funnel web spiders (one of the most venomous spiders in the world) may have sheltered from flood waters in sea containers and other imported goods.



The deadly funnel web spider.

Fishy pork

Everything was not as it seemed when officers inspected a package declared as pork at Auckland's International Mail Centre in late February.

Sure enough, the package contained packets of fish floss as well as pork.

Ironically, the declared pork was prohibited and has since been destroyed. The fish was compliant and later released.



Magic beans sniffed out

The "magic beans" (pictured right) may do a lot for promoting love and world peace, but they won't be growing in New Zealand anytime soon.

Detector dog Gina sniffed them out at the International Mail Centre in March. Unfortunately for the importer, magic beans are not approved on Biosecurity NZ's plant biosecurity index.



"How to" guides for container reporting

Instruction videos are now available to help transitional facilities (TFs) comply with new requirements to report on every arriving sea container.

The videos show TF staff how to use the Container Check reporting tool, covering topics such as:

- recording containers with multiple types of contamination.
- providing details about consignments that have more than one container.
- printing inspection records.

The videos seem to be doing their job. Since their release in early March, technical queries about the reporting system have dropped right off.

We introduced the 100% reporting requirement in July last year. The information allows us to track all container movements, providing a much clearer picture of biosecurity risk posed by this pathway.

TFs previously only reported containers found with contamination.

Gina's bone detection

Detector dog Gina also sniffed out these animal bones (see below) during her mail duties.

She must have been horrified to find one of the bags contained a dog skeleton kit set.

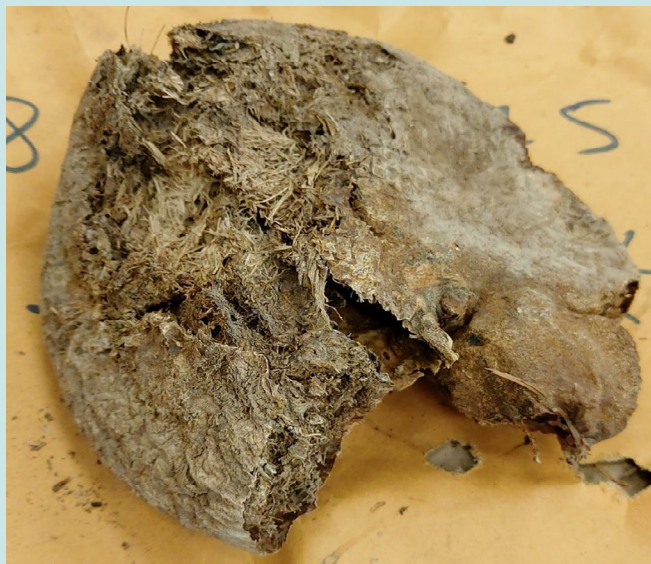
Declared by a regular importer of animal specimens, the bones came all the way from the Czech Republic. They also were soiled with organic material, so had to undergo treatment.



Dinner dung

A plastic bag containing dried animal dung was both a biosecurity threat and an unusual culinary choice.

Declared as cooking powder, the unidentified dung arrived from Vietnam in March. It clearly contained digested plant material.



Health and safety update

We are continuing to shine our health and safety light on transitional facilities (TFs).

Remote verification available

To reduce the physical presence of officers onsite while COVID-19 is still spreading, we are offering remote verification of TF operations. This includes assessment of risk profile ratings, compliance history and traffic levels.

The remote option is only available for verification purposes. All other biosecurity inspections of risk goods or compliance investigations will still be carried out onsite.

Too much timber

We have noticed an increase in the size of imported timber consignments is making it harder for our officers to carry out thorough and safe inspections at some facilities.

In some cases, the issue may be resolved by extending the controlled area where consignments are presented for inspection. Please be aware that any extension requires approval from your local Biosecurity NZ office.

Bird nest seizure

A recent alert from an express freight company resulted in the seizure of edible bird nest – a delicacy that has the potential to carry deadly avian diseases.

The freight company's Australian office thought things didn't stack up when a client declared a consignment as noodles and French champagne. One of our Auckland officers checked out the alert when the goods arrived in New Zealand.

There were indeed noodle and champagne boxes inside the consignment, but they (and other boxes) contained edible bird nests. Formed from cave swallow spit, the nests were worth around \$8000.

We have referred the matter to Biosecurity NZ's compliance team to investigate.



Border activity for January/February 2022

	Jan-21	Jan-22	Feb-21	Feb-22
Passenger				
Total arrivals	13,133	15,751	12,412	16,195
NZ/Australia	8,350	10,310	7,531	9,874
Rest of world	4,783	5,441	4,881	6,321
Risk items seized	228	219	231	187
Risk items treated or destroyed	226	200	227	152
Infringement notices	7	6	4	5
Mail				
Mail items screened	1,980,257	1,801,659	1,283,896	1,153,616
Mail items requiring further inspection	4,356	3,163	3,282	2,431
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	831	632	552	465
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	64,312	55,974	59,223	55,448
Sea containers inspected	2,105	2,410	2,703	3,101
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	19,047	17,799	19,446	17,687
Cargo lines inspected	5,400	4,769	5,683	4,368
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	1,141	1,286	1,392	1,119



Steve Gilbert
Central/South Regional Commissioner
Biosecurity New Zealand



Mike Inglis
Northern Regional Commissioner
Biosecurity New Zealand