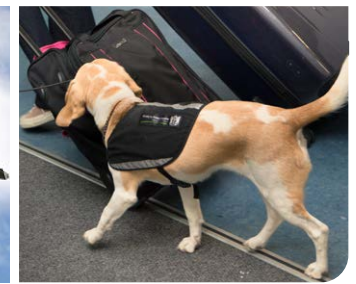




# The BorderSpace

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



## Yachts return

**The return of international yachts and other small craft is a sign our border operations are starting to return to normal.**

We expect to clear some 140–160 yachts at Opuā this summer (between October and December) now that New Zealand's maritime border is open again.

In comparison, officers cleared 158 yachts for the whole of 2021 under the pandemic-related ban on foreign recreational craft entering New Zealand.

So yes, arrival numbers are rising, but there is still some way to go to match the 2019 season, which saw more than 400 clearances at Opuā alone.

This season will also see more ports open to international yachts. Arrivals were restricted to Opuā at the beginning of the pandemic. This season, vessels can land at any approved port of first arrival (PoFA) or Customs control area. Opuā is traditionally the most popular landing spot followed by Marsden Cove, near Whangārei.

We have trained eight officers to help clear yacht arrivals this season. The training focused on common biosecurity issues, including biofouling and garbage control. Risk goods associated with yachts include wooden items and animal and plant products.

In the past, we have sent officers to Fiji and Tonga to brief gatherings of yachties on our clearance requirements. Due to lower arrival numbers, we won't be doing that this season, but have sent information packs to event organisers for distribution.



## Popular entry ports

The main entry ports for yachts and pleasure craft are:

- **Opuā Marine Park, Opuā (pictured below)**
- Marsden Cove Marina, Whangārei
- Viaduct Harbour Marina, Auckland (superyachts only)
- Westhaven Marina, Auckland (yachts less than 22m)
- Vessel Works Marine Precinct, Tauranga
- Port of Marlborough, Picton
- Lyttelton Port.

**400+**  
international vessels arrived in Opuā  
in the 2019 yacht season

**140–160** yachts are expected to  
land in Opuā this season

# New stink bug season underway

**It's time to start talking about brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) again. After a four-month break, the latest season is underway.**

The 2022/23 BMSB season started on 1 September and will run until 30 April 2023.

We conducted a thorough review of the previous season before the September kick-off. There continues to be no evidence of any established BMSB population in New Zealand, which suggests our previous biosecurity approach has worked well. However, we are always looking for ways to improve.

Refinements for this season include tweaks to the import standard for sea containers. The requirement for containers and goods from Italy to be treated offshore during the BMSB season is now permanent. It was introduced as a temporary measure in 2018. Other changes to this standard were covered in the [previous issue of The Border Space](#).

There are no changes to the import standard for vehicles, machinery and parts, which are a common hiding place for BMSB. Goods of this nature from identified high-risk countries must undergo offshore management before arrival in New Zealand. The management measures currently apply to 38 countries (known as "Schedule 3" countries). Biosecurity NZ will continue to monitor the international BMSB situation and will add to the Schedule 3 list if required.



Biosecurity NZ officials have also been working closely with Australian biosecurity authorities to coordinate approval and auditing of offshore treatment providers. We will continue to share information as the season progresses.

The BMSB season is traditionally a busy time for our officers. Continuation of new measures to address the foot-and-mouth disease threat from Indonesia (see page 7) means our officers are likely to be busier than ever.

As with previous seasons, inspections will be targeted at cargo that has a high risk of carrying BMSB. We are still finalising how many additional container inspections will be undertaken during the eight-month season. Part of this work will also involve monitoring lower-risk goods and pathways to pick up any emerging threats.

All vessels with breakbulk (uncontainerised) cargo from Schedule 3 countries will be subject to inspection on arrival. Under our verification programme for new vehicles, we expect to check roughly 3700 vehicles and 700 machinery items during the season.

For the first time since before the COVID-19 pandemic, officers and other biosecurity personnel will travel to Japan to audit local cleaning and inspection operations for used vehicles coming to New Zealand. This auditing was managed virtually during the pandemic. We expect to see more live interceptions from Japan this season. There are reports of high numbers of bugs around locations such as Tokyo. A wet and warmer-than-usual winter suggests greater bug activity.

Officers will also be working with vessel agents to ensure accurate reporting of BMSB detections made by crew during voyages to New Zealand. This information feeds into our risk assessments, allowing us to focus our interventions on where they are most needed. We saw high levels of engagement from the shipping industry last year and want to keep this momentum going.

We have also begun distributing education material to transitional facilities, targeting those that receive higher-risk cargo. A wider public awareness campaign is expected to start shortly.

# Campaign targets higher-risk travellers

**Higher-risk travellers arriving in New Zealand will be the next target of our “declare or dispose” public awareness campaign following the removal of pandemic-related border restrictions.**

The aim of the campaign is to get travellers from overseas to leave biosecurity risk items at home or declare or dispose of them on arrival at the airport.

We restarted the campaign for New Zealand and Australian

travellers in July. The second phase will target higher-risk audiences, determined by compliance rate and cultural reasons regarding their likelihood to carry food and other biosecurity threats. The audiences are Indian and Chinese travellers, New Zealand-based Indian and Chinese who have family and friends visiting from overseas, New Zealanders returning from high-risk countries, and international students.

Initially at least, there will be more ads geared towards travellers from India than China. The Indian travel market is currently very

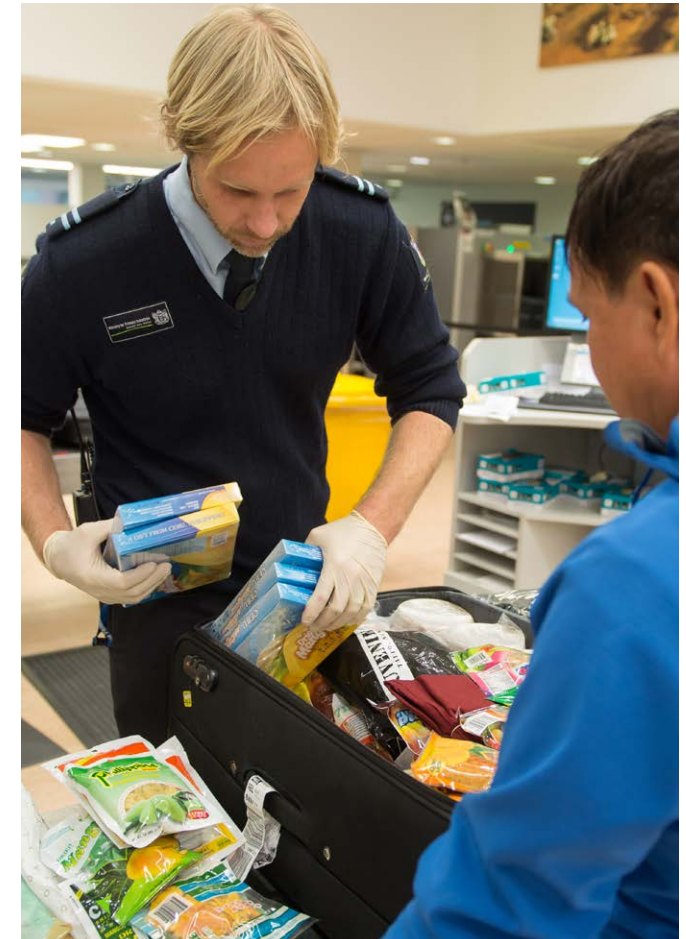
active. In comparison, there are still strict COVID-19-related travel restrictions in place in China.

The campaign will run from September to March. It has been great to secure advertising space on the e-tickets used by Air New Zealand. Our marketing team has also organised ads to appear with Google searches, on digital display boards and in ethnic media.



Proposed artwork targeted at New Zealand-based Indians. About 80% of travellers visiting family and friends from India are prompted by friends and families about New Zealand biosecurity rules.

Biosecurity warning on Air New Zealand electronic tickets.



# State of play

**There are high expectations that Biosecurity NZ will keep pests and diseases out of New Zealand as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Here's a rundown of some of the challenges at the border and how they are being addressed.**

## Travel explosion

The passenger pathway is opening faster than expected. New Zealanders are embracing the opportunity to travel, and overseas visitors are on the rise. There was more than a 1500% increase in passengers for August, compared with the same month last year (see border stats on page 13).

Our recruitment efforts and ongoing work to digitise the clearance process has put us in good stead to meet the increased demand.

As regular readers of **The Border Space** will be aware, we have a project team working with other border agencies on the introduction of a digital arrival card by April next year. Work is also progressing with developing algorithms to enable new baggage screening technology to automatically detect biosecurity threats. We are also working closely with international airports on changes to arrival areas to make best use of the new technology.

An unwanted development is the rising level of lost baggage, particularly from Australia. At its most extreme, we have seen passenger aircraft land without any baggage. The problem is essentially one of double handling. We have to clear passengers and their baggage separately.

## Cruise newbies

It's an exciting time for the cruise industry. The first cruise ship in nearly two years arrived in New Zealand on 12 August, carrying nearly 1200 passengers.

The start of the cruise season proper will be when the *Majestic Princess* pulls into Tauranga on 15 October.

We're very aware of the need to re-educate cruise lines and passengers on New Zealand's biosecurity rules, which include some of the toughest biofouling restrictions in the world.

Vessel operators should expect more gangway checks than in the past for at least the early part of the season.

To this end, we will be holding off accrediting any vessel under our Recognised Cruise Line Programme until closer to Christmas. Accredited vessels must demonstrate they meet strict biosecurity requirements with documented processes and auditing. This reduces the need for some gangway checks.

## Adapting to cargo risk

We have assessed 461 transitional facilities as posing the highest biosecurity threat to New Zealand. Together, they account for some 65% of imports.

Officers have been working closely with these facilities to ensure there are appropriate biosecurity controls in place, which are now assessed under our new performance-based verification approach ([see previous issue of The Border Space](#)).

The new verification approach is part of a wider move away from a one-size-fits-all way of ensuring imported cargo meets biosecurity requirements. Simply put, we have become a lot more adaptable than the past. Recently, this has seen us set up a number of one-off arrangements to move containers from ports as quickly as possible.

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We are aware of industry concerns about clearance holdups and are looking at ways to empower more biosecurity decisions by third parties. Employing more and more officers to undertake cargo checks is not a sustainable solution. It is great that industry is keen to take on greater responsibility.

## Parcel packing

There is an increasing number of containers arriving jam-packed with individual parcels that, in the past, would have been imported as separate express freight or mail items. We used to see one container of consolidated parcel freight a month. We're now seeing 10 or more. The trend poses biosecurity challenges. There is often little information about individual goods on the manifest. Officers have to check every parcel, which can take up to four days and often results in the detection of risk goods. We have made it a priority to design a new clearance approach to address these concerns (stay tuned!).



Food items from a consolidated parcel freight container



## 31 October 2022 · Auckland

The biosecurity landscape has changed much since our last biosecurity forum in 2018. This year's event in Auckland on 31 October provides an opportunity for anyone interested in biosecurity to discuss current issues and developments.

▶ **Further details, including the programme and how to register, are available on the Biosecurity NZ website.**

# Keeping FMD out

**Biosecurity NZ ramped up its border defences following the recent detection of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Indonesia. Summarised here, the emergency measures demonstrate we are prepared to act quickly and decisively to protect New Zealand from emerging biosecurity threats.**

## Vessels

- Officers search arriving vessels from Indonesia for risk products, including crew footwear. Any detected footwear aboard a vessel is disinfected. Meat products must be sealed in a meat locker. Officers check locker security at any further port visits while the vessel is in New Zealand waters.
- We are working with shipping lines to increase awareness of FMD and the new measures. This includes discussion with vessel masters at ports of the first arrival.
- Any crew member leaving the vessel faces a baggage inspection.

## Passengers

- Travellers who have been in Indonesia during the last 30 days are flagged to undergo enhanced risk assessment. This involves further questioning and baggage screening with a focus on finding potentially contaminated footwear. Targeted passengers must also walk over disinfectant mats.
- NZ Customs' eGate passport control system now features a new travel history question to help identify air passengers who have been in Indonesia.
- There is a temporary ban on personal consignments of meat and meat products. Previously, travellers from Indonesia could bring in declared processed meat.
- A wide-ranging public awareness campaign is in place to educate arriving travellers of the importance of declaring any goods that could carry FMD. The campaign includes in-flight announcements, digital noticeboards at airports and flyers for passengers.
- There have been regular updates to primary sector partners and the country's veterinary network to encourage anyone

who has been in contact with livestock in Indonesia to stay away from farms and animals in New Zealand for at least a week.

## Mail

- There is a dedicated clearance process for mail arriving from Indonesia. The process involves visual profiling and screening with detector dogs and x-ray.

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Footbath prototype trials at Auckland Airport.

## The FMD threat

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease for cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep and pigs. The virus causes a high fever, followed by blisters inside the mouth and on the feet of the affected animal. The blisters can rupture, causing lameness. If the animal is left untreated, the disease can cause death.



## Stocking up on footbaths

We're well stocked with footbaths should the FMD threat escalate.

When the FMD outbreak spread to Bali in July, we introduced disinfectant baths to sanitise the footwear of travellers who have recently been in Indonesia. This saw the initial purchase of 10 baths for use at international airports in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown.

We have since purchased another 50, which will provide capacity to cover port and airport traffic if the outbreak spreads.

Our health and safety people are using a prototype bath station at Auckland Airport to consider refinements. The current prototype incorporates features such as safety handles and a slip resistant surface made from recycled rubber.

## Express freight

- Parcels from Indonesia are held on arrival for detector dog screening or manual inspection by officers.

## Cargo

- Sea containers from Indonesia cannot be opened at transitional facilities (TFs) without the presence of a quarantine officer.
- TF auditing has been prioritised for facilities that receive containers from Indonesia.
- Officers have been carrying out checks at supermarkets, food stalls and other locations to ensure imported animal products are compliant with biosecurity requirements.

## Cruise ships

- We have been working with cruise lines to alert passengers and crew of FMD requirements.
- Officers questioned and handed out information flyers to disembarking passengers when the first cruise ship of the season arrived on 12 August. We also trialled the use of a disinfectant mat for this pathway.
- We will finalise FMD requirements before the season revs up later this month.



Beef crackling intercepted in an express freight parcel from Indonesia.

## FMD border controls – what’s next?

Biosecurity NZ and Australian officials are continuing to assess the risk posed by Indonesia’s FMD outbreak. We will adjust our border measures as required. We are also developing contingency plans should the emergency measures remain in place over summer and during the brown marmorated stink bug season. Planning is underway for how we would handle an outbreak in Australia or other Pacific countries.



## Want to foster a Detector Dog puppy?

**We're looking for families to foster a puppy from our next litter.**

If you live in Auckland or Hamilton, have a fully fenced section, and are at home most of the day, we want to hear from you!

### For more information:

- [biosecurity.govt.nz/fosterpuppies](https://biosecurity.govt.nz/fosterpuppies)
- [facebook.com/MPIdetectordogs](https://facebook.com/MPIdetectordogs)
- [detector.dog@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:detector.dog@mpi.govt.nz)



**Biosecurity New Zealand**

Ministry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu Matua



## Offshore grape inspections back on the table

**For the first time in nearly two years, officers are heading to California to carry out pre-border checks of imported table grapes.**

The high-value commodity is commonly contaminated with invasive weed seeds and poisonous spiders such as black widows or red backs. It is also a fruit fly host material.

Verification checks of table grapes have only been available upon arrival for most of the pandemic.

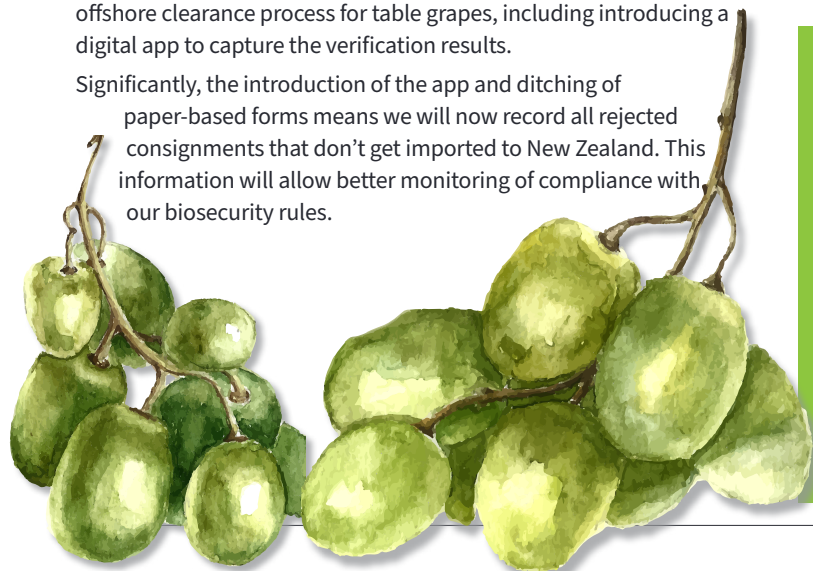
We welcome the return of the offshore option. It makes good biosecurity sense to pick up any issues before imported grapes enter New Zealand.

Pre-arrival checks also provide commercial benefits to importers. For example, if contamination is detected, an importer can make an early call on whether to ship the fruit to other markets with less stringent biosecurity requirements.

Four officers will travel to California to undertake inspections between September and November.

During the travel shutdown, we did a lot of work to streamline the offshore clearance process for table grapes, including introducing a digital app to capture the verification results.

Significantly, the introduction of the app and ditching of paper-based forms means we will now record all rejected consignments that don't get imported to New Zealand. This information will allow better monitoring of compliance with our biosecurity rules.



## Strengthening the cruise pathway

**The arrival of *Pacific Explorer* on 12 August heralded the start of what will hopefully be the first full cruise season since 2019.**

We've been working behind the scenes to ensure the season goes smoothly from a biosecurity perspective.

One of the things we've been looking at is how to strengthen the existing accreditation scheme. The scheme offers vessels an opportunity for reduced gangway scrutiny of disembarking passengers, but only if they can prove they are following best biosecurity practices.

Along with the new name for the scheme of Recognised Cruise Line Programme, (RCLP), there are additional biosecurity requirements for accredited vessels. These include approved processes to manage rubbish, pests and provisions and to promote biosecurity awareness among passengers and crew.

At the same time, we have designed a thorough compliance evaluation and audit process to ensure RCLP vessels are meeting biosecurity expectations.

We are working to get this process accredited to ISO17020, an international quality standard. This standard sets out competency requirements for organisations that perform inspections, ensuring they are carried out impartially and consistently.

The accreditation requirements for this standard will ensure our officers keep their auditing skills up to speed and give confidence to the cruise industry.

We hope to gain accreditation to ISO17020 before Christmas. It's very possible we will be audited around the same time we start our own auditing of vessels under the RCLP.



**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](https://thisisus.nz)**

# More frontline officers

**We recently welcomed 17 new quarantine officers to help protect New Zealand's borders from invasive pests and diseases.**

Eleven officers graduated on Friday after completing an intensive 10-week training programme. They will work at frontline border locations in Auckland to ensure international travellers and imported goods comply with New Zealand's strict biosecurity rules. The other six new officers have joined Biosecurity NZ's border teams in Wellington, Queenstown and Dunedin.

We plan to recruit and train nearly 60 new quarantine officers by the end of this year. This includes the most recent graduates and a new cohort of 15 recruits that started training in Auckland in late September. There are plans to recruit a further 20 Auckland officers in early 2023.

Of this year's recruits, 38 will be based in Auckland. In the other regions, 11 new officers have been deployed to Wellington, Queenstown, Timaru and Dunedin. Another 12 will be recruited, including four for Christchurch.

The recruitment drive puts us a strong position to respond to increased demand at the border following the lifting of travel restrictions.

Tiffany Wearing picked up the He Whaai Whakaaro Award for the top graduate among the latest cohort. Her previous role at an Auckland cargo facility gave her a taste for biosecurity. She is looking forward to putting her new skills into practice at Auckland Airport, where she will be based for the next six months.



Tiffany Wearing (centre) receives the He Whaai Whakaaro Award for the top Auckland graduate, accompanied by Mike Inglis and Acting Chief Quarantine Officer Holly Molander.



Cook Islands biosecurity officers Tamarua Teroi (left, back row) and Piriariki Maa (right, second row) with the latest Auckland cohort of graduate quarantine officers and their trainers.

## Enhancing Pacific biosecurity

**It has been an honour to host two officers from the Cook Islands under a programme to strengthen biosecurity in Pacific nations.**

A collaboration between Biosecurity NZ and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Enhancement of the Pacific Biosecurity Partnership Programme provides biosecurity support to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Niue. Our Auckland capability and performance team hosted the two officers for nine weeks.

The visit provided an opportunity for the officers to take part in a recent induction programme for new recruits. They took

part in various workshops and training sessions covering areas such as biosecurity legislation, enforcement, risk assessment and baggage inspection. They also got the opportunity to build their skills with hands-on experience at international airport, port and cargo facilities.

The trip has hopefully provided ideas for strengthening biosecurity in the Cook Islands. Our own officers also benefited from the knowledge sharing and by gaining a unique perspective on Pacific biosecurity.

Next up, two officers from Fiji will join the Auckland team as the partnership programme continues to grow.



# From the frontline

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

### Squashed Aussie arrival

A squashed Aussie snake in a sea container has been confirmed as a species we definitely don't want in New Zealand.

Spotted by a staff member at a Timaru transitional facility during routine biosecurity checks in August, the partially decomposed remains have been confirmed as an eastern brown snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*).

The eastern brown snake is highly toxic. It causes more deaths from snake bites than any other species in Australia. Adding to the danger, the snake tends to be very nervous and often reacts defensively if surprised or cornered. Its venom remains dangerous

even when the snake is dead, meaning extreme care is required when handling.

In line with our procedures, officers treated the snake as a live detection. The container, which had arrived from Brisbane, was resealed and fumigated. Trained snake handlers then supervised the unloading of the container and collection of the specimen.

The snake appeared to have been dead for some time. It was likely flattened by a pallet or a forklift before departing Australia. Our snake expert determined the specimen was a juvenile. No external parasites were found.

Officers also detected three scats (faecal material) close to the snake body. The scats were later determined to be from a rodent rather than a snake.

This is the third time there has been a detection of an eastern brown snake in New Zealand. One of these involved a live specimen, detected at a transitional facility in Petone in 2000.

The species has the potential to naturalise in parts of New Zealand if given the chance.

### Masked termites

The importer of this wooden mask from Indonesia opted for fumigation to wipe out a termite infestation.

Intercepted by Christchurch officers, the mask arrived in a consignment of personal effects.

### Soiled skull

A parcel containing a soiled cattle skull and other animal parts from Indonesia sparked biosecurity alarm in August, especially with our officers on high alert for goods that could carry foot-and-mouth disease.

It arrived with live maggots. The importer opted for treatment of the parcel, which was intercepted at an express freight depot in Christchurch.



### Fine for plant smuggler

A woman who admitted smuggling plants in the post will have to pay \$8000 (\$5000 in fines and a \$3000 donation to charity) and do 200 hours of community service.

The culprit pleaded guilty. However, as she was discharged without conviction in August, we can't identify her.

We started looking into her importing practices after intercepting an incorrectly declared parcel containing eight live plants.

She later admitted to using different names and addresses to import several consignments of plant material. A scan of our records showed officers at Auckland's International Mail Centre had intercepted various packages intended for her and had provided information on how to correctly import plant material.

This evidence clearly didn't help her case. Neither did the 13 unauthorised plants that were seized from her address during the execution of the search warrant.



The squashed snake.



## From the frontline continued

### Hanging (horse snack) offence

An undeclared horse snack resulted in a \$400 fine for an Aussie air passenger arriving in Christchurch.

An x-ray officer detected the snack in early August. Designed to hang in a stable, it contained untreated oats, corn and wheat stuck together with corn syrup. Of particular concern, it was destined straight for a rural area.



### Box of bats

A recently intercepted mail parcel containing 85 Indonesian dried bats required formalin treatment to get through the border.

To meet our biosecurity requirements, animal specimens have to be tanned or undergo taxidermy. As these bats were only dried, they could have been carrying animal diseases.

The bats also showed signs of insect damage.



### Hoof fails

A mail package containing a strange assortment of crocodile tails, goat milk soap, fish skins, duck liver and a cow hoof clearly deserved closer examination.

Arriving from Australia in early September, the items mostly complied with biosecurity requirements. The hoof didn't – it still had tissue attached to it.

Officers referred the crocodile tails to the Department of Conservation to check compliance with rules for trading endangered species.



### Dirty boots and footwear destroyed

Foot-and-mouth disease was top of mind when Christchurch officers seized the pictured dirty boots and clothes.

An Irish farmer declared the boots at Christchurch Airport in August. He was understanding of the decision to destroy them, given they were covered with wet manure.

Declared by an Australian farmer at the same airport, the filthy work clothes were also destroyed.



## Border activity for July/August 2022

	July-21	July-22	August-21	August-22
<b>Passenger</b>				
Total arrivals	72,144	<b>308,106</b>	18,820	<b>310,389</b>
NZ/Australia	64,064	<b>239,065</b>	13,878	<b>238,538</b>
Rest of world	8,080	<b>69,041</b>	4,942	<b>71,851</b>
Risk items seized	1,002	<b>4,467</b>	322	<b>8,090</b>
Risk items treated or destroyed	1,023	<b>4,162</b>	321	<b>7,621</b>
Infringement notices	54	<b>265</b>	10	<b>290</b>
<b>Mail</b>				
Mail items screened	1,578,178	<b>1,166,971</b>	1,461,077	<b>1,329,765</b>
Mail items requiring further inspection	4,324	<b>1,927</b>	4,391	<b>2,360</b>
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	796	<b>354</b>	677	<b>506</b>
<b>Sea Containers</b>				
Sea containers arrivals	64,247	<b>58,245</b>	69,272	<b>59,475</b>
Sea containers inspected	2,685	<b>2,443</b>	2,302	<b>1,893</b>
<b>Cargo</b>				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	22,272	<b>16,765</b>	22,178	<b>19,581</b>
Cargo lines inspected	6,617	<b>4,986</b>	7,147	<b>6,303</b>
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	1,385	<b>925</b>	1,743	<b>1,068</b>



Steve Gilbert  
Central/South Regional Commissioner  
Biosecurity New Zealand



Mike Inglis  
Northern Regional Commissioner  
Biosecurity New Zealand