



The BorderSpace

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



Stink bug season expected to ramp up



We're expecting to see brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) interceptions increase as we enter the high-risk months of the season.

...continued overleaf

Farewell from Steve

Dear readers of The Border Space

After 48 years of public service, I have decided it's time to retire. This will be the last issue of **The Border Space** before my border clearance role at Biosecurity New Zealand ends in December.

For the last 10 years, I have been privileged to lead a highly skilled and motivated border team and work alongside colleagues committed to achieving biosecurity excellence. I feel very proud of what we, with industry support, have put in place to protect New Zealand's borders.

Of course, the job of maintaining a world-class biosecurity system is never complete. I'll be watching with interest how the system develops to address the challenges ahead from my new home in Papamoa.

Like you, I plan to subscribe to **The Border Space** to keep up with events. Based on years of positive feedback, I know there is an appreciative audience for this newsletter. I have seen the distribution list grow from a few select stakeholders to nearly 1700 over nine years. And I know it has a much wider reach through further distribution along the grapevine by those on our mailing list.



To let you in on a trade secret, my northern colleague Mike and I are not the real authors of the finely crafted prose you read in this newsletter. For that, I thank the MPI communications team and senior advisor William Minchin in particular.

You probably haven't heard the last from me. I hope to keep in touch with friends, colleagues, and business contacts from my time on the biosecurity frontline.

For now, I wish the best for everyone I have worked with. Have a happy Christmas and keep on protecting New Zealand.

Steve Gilbert
Central/South Regional
Commissioner
Biosecurity New Zealand

BMSB typically starts to arrive in cargo around late spring. The full season runs from September to April.

As regular readers of **The Border Space** will be aware, we track international developments to guide our targeting for this invasive pest.

We know that warm weather in Canada and Japan has seen a lot of BMSB activity in the lead-up to our season. Japan has issued the highest number of BMSB pest warnings since 2016. And the Invasive Species Council of British Columbia recently issued an alert for citizens to report any sightings, following record numbers of detections.

Early warnings like this can mean greater risk of BMSB aggregations arriving with imports. At this stage, we don't believe the threat from these nations is any greater than other high-risk countries we monitor.

We already use a range of measures to address the risk of BMSB in cargo from Japan and Canada, including offshore treatment requirements for vehicles and machinery, surveillance of arriving vessels, crew reporting and targeted and random inspections of imported goods. New Zealand biosecurity personnel recently travelled to Japan to audit local cleaning and inspection operations for used vehicles. They found no significant issues.

As we have done in the past, we are prepared to direct contaminated vessels to leave New Zealand waters if necessary.

We are monitoring the situation closely, particularly with Air Canada flights to Auckland set to resume shortly.

At the time of writing in late November, there had been nearly 350 individual bug interceptions. Of these, 14 of the bugs were alive. At the same time last year, there had been 17 live interceptions. The dead bugs were found in vessels and cargo. Many were handed to our officers by crews on arrival. The high number of dead BMSB suggests our offshore treatment requirements remain a very effective form of defence.

Interestingly, the first two live interceptions of the season involved the passenger pathway.

One of our officers snared a single live BMSB on an airport search bench on 8 October. Passengers arriving from the United States were being cleared at the time.

The second bug was recently found on an aircraft from South Korea on 18 October prior to passengers leaving the plane. The bug was on an airline mattress and wasn't associated with any specific passenger or their belongings.

Biosecurity NZ recently ramped up its public awareness activities to encourage New Zealanders to report possible BMSB sightings.

Funded with support from industry members of the BMSB Council, the campaign will run from November to March, targeting local gardeners and online shoppers who receive goods from overseas.

The summer campaign follows advertising during the winter to increase awareness of the pest among people undertaking indoor activities such as home renovations. BMSB seeks shelter indoors during the winter. The bug is more likely to be found outside during the summer.



The brown marmorated stink bug above, was spotted in the search bench area at Auckland Airport. Thanks to one of our officers, the bug was caught and safely contained, becoming one of the first live BMSB interceptions for the 2022/23 season.



BMSB watch

BMSB infests several horticultural crops, causing damage to flowers, stems, leaves and fruit of host plants. Significant crops likely to be affected in New Zealand include apples, corn, wine grapes, kiwifruit, and a range of stone fruit varieties.

Anyone who thinks they've found BMSB is asked to catch it, snap it (take a photo), and report it. The find can be reported [online](#) or via Biosecurity New Zealand's hotline **0800 80 99 66**.

More information about BMSB is available on the [Biosecurity New Zealand website](#). The site has useful resources for people dealing with imported cargo, including [BMSB identification posters](#).

High-tech mail scanners expected in January

The latest mail screening technology will soon be steaming towards New Zealand.

Biosecurity NZ has ordered two Rapiscan 6040DV scanners to operate in New Zealand Post's new processing centre in Wiri, Auckland, which will replace the International Mail Centre as the arrival point for overseas mail.

The 6040DV is the security equipment manufacturer's latest model. We will be the first border agency in the world to use it. The scanners are due to depart Singapore in mid-December. Rapiscan is currently finishing the build and testing the units.

Intended to screen small parcels, the new scanners will operate along the larger RTT 3D unit we have been testing with mail this year.

Unlike the RTT, the two new units won't provide 3D images, but they are the next best thing, providing



operators with images of potential biosecurity threats from two different sides. They can be operated remotely from a control room. And they will come with a new radiation shrouding system that doesn't use curtains. This will allow small, light items to easily pass through the scanner.

The new control room at the main processing centre will also be the first of its type in the world, allowing us to screen images from multiple scanners without the need for operators next to the machines. While the concept is new for biosecurity, it is widely used for aviation security.

We have already started trialling the control room approach, using the RTT scanner currently in place at Auckland Airport for screening check-in baggage.

We hope to start testing the 6040DV scanners at New Zealand Post's new site around March. The processing centre is now due to open in mid-2024.



Rapiscan's new 6040DV scanner with curtain-less shrouding at the Singapore factory.



A control room will allow our officers to view x-ray images of mail and passenger baggage from afar.

Border tweaks to address FMD threat

We have made some tweaks to our border measures to address the threat of foot-and-mouth disease entering New Zealand from Indonesia.

Our quarantine officers will no longer need to be present at the opening of all arriving containers from Indonesia. This measure was introduced in late July.

Officers will continue to verify 10% of Indonesian containers. In addition, all containers with meat products will face supervised inspections. And every imported container will continue to undergo routine checks at transitional facilities.

The changes come after a careful risk assessment determined that time in transit from Indonesia to New Zealand is sufficient to address any container contamination due to contact with animals. It is also clear that many of the commodities coming from Indonesia pose low biosecurity risk. These include plastics, toilet paper and clothing.

We are aware that the additional inspection requirements were causing some clearance delays. So, the change should be welcomed by importers and other industry players.

Containers from Indonesia will still require more supervised inspection than those from other countries. We normally randomly verify around 1% of imported containers that are not covered by targeted alerts.



The other change is to reduce the risk period for travellers arriving from Indonesia. We will now pull aside travellers who have visited Indonesia in the last seven days, rather than 30 days, for additional checks.

The enhanced measures for affected travellers include further questioning, footbaths and baggage searches. The change aligns with the targeting approach used by Australian biosecurity officials.

Other FMD measures remain in place at this stage. The FMD threat from Indonesia remains very real, particularly with direct flights from Bali expected to resume in March.

However, within the next six months or so, the FMD threat from Indonesia may reduce to similar levels as other southeast Asian countries that have cases of the infectious disease. There are no reports that FMD has spread from Indonesia to neighbouring countries. Local authorities have introduced a vaccination programme for affected animals.

Biosecurity NZ will continue to assess the risk and adjust its border measures as required.

Northland biosecurity ambassadors to greet cruise ships

We have partnered with local hapū in the Bay of Islands to help educate cruise ship passengers about biosecurity.

The Mana Moana Biosecurity Ambassador programme will see representatives from three hapū welcome disembarking passengers.

Running as a pilot programme for this cruise season, a team of seven ambassadors will greet 48 of the 52 ships expected to visit Northland from 24 November to 25 April.

The ambassadors will emphasise the importance of good biosecurity to Northland making sure passengers know they can't take food and other risk goods off the cruise ship, and are aware of what they need to do to protect kauri forests and local waterways.

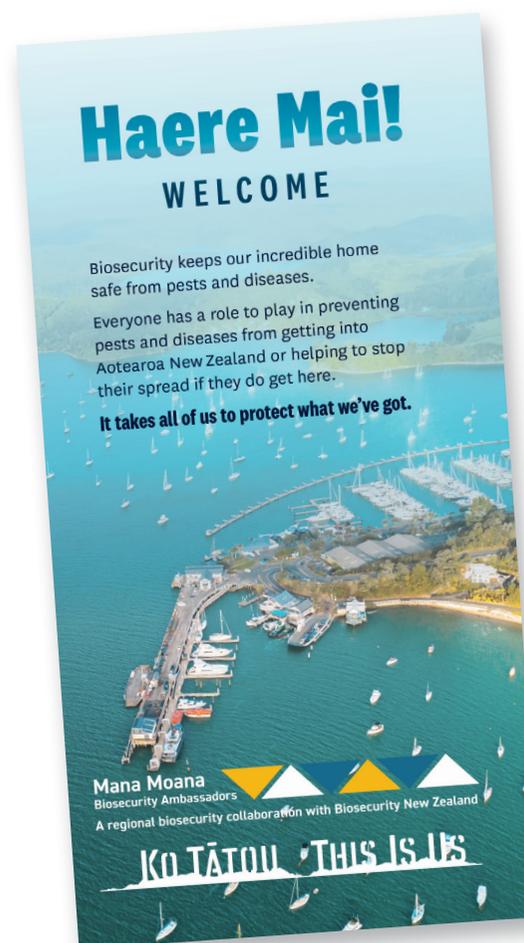
Supported by Biosecurity NZ, Northland Regional Council, Far North Holdings and a local marketing company, the programme aims to address biosecurity concerns raised by the community about the expected influx of cruise passengers to the region this season.

Talking about cruise ships, we are in the process of provisionally

approving two cruise lines under our Recognised Cruise Line Programme (RCLP). Recognised vessels must prove they are following best-practice onboard biosecurity. Once we have this assurance, recognised vessels may be subject to fewer gangway checks during port visits.

As part of the approval, we evaluate and verify documented practices such as measures to ensure food stores are free of pests and that passengers are regularly informed about New Zealand's biosecurity regulations.

The next step involves physical audits of arriving vessels operated by the cruise lines. Four audits were underway at the time of writing. For full approval, the vessels will have to pass the auditing and demonstrate ongoing compliance.



This season, we will work with 13 cruise lines that send vessels to New Zealand. We expect many of these will apply for the RCLP.

Some of the smaller lines are likely to apply for full clearance/quarantine exempt status (QEV). This involves securing or surrendering all stores and other risk goods that don't meet New Zealand's biosecurity rules. The vessel can then visit other ports without further biosecurity checks.

QEV is an option for vessels that want to visit ports that are not approved for international arrivals.

The new biosecurity ambassadors will hand out this brochure to visiting cruise ship passengers in Northland.



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/biosecurity-business-pledge

More border recruits

We continue to increase the number of quarantine officers around the country as passenger numbers return closer to pre-COVID-19 levels.

In November, we welcomed 19 new graduate quarantine officers from the third cohort of new recruits this year. Of these graduates, 15 will join our Auckland team in Auckland. Four will be based in Wellington.

The graduates completed an intensive 10-week training programme, but the learning doesn't stop there. They will continue to learn on the job, and we will be supporting them as they get up to speed.

Among this cohort, we were pleased to have two biosecurity officers from Fiji. They joined the training programme as part of the Enhancement of the Pacific Biosecurity Partnership Programme. We recently hosted two officers from the Cook Islands under this programme.

64 new officers trained this year

This programme provides biosecurity support to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Niue. It is a collaboration between Biosecurity New Zealand and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The last cohort for the year began their training on 23 November. This will bring a further five officers into Wellington, six into Christchurch and five into Queenstown. By mid-December, we will have trained 64 new officers this year.

Also joining our biosecurity team soon will be graduates from the detector dog programme (see page 6).

Congratulations to all our new recruits – both human and canine!

And expect to see more frontline recruits early next year. We have already started advertising for new positions in Auckland with training expected to start in late January.



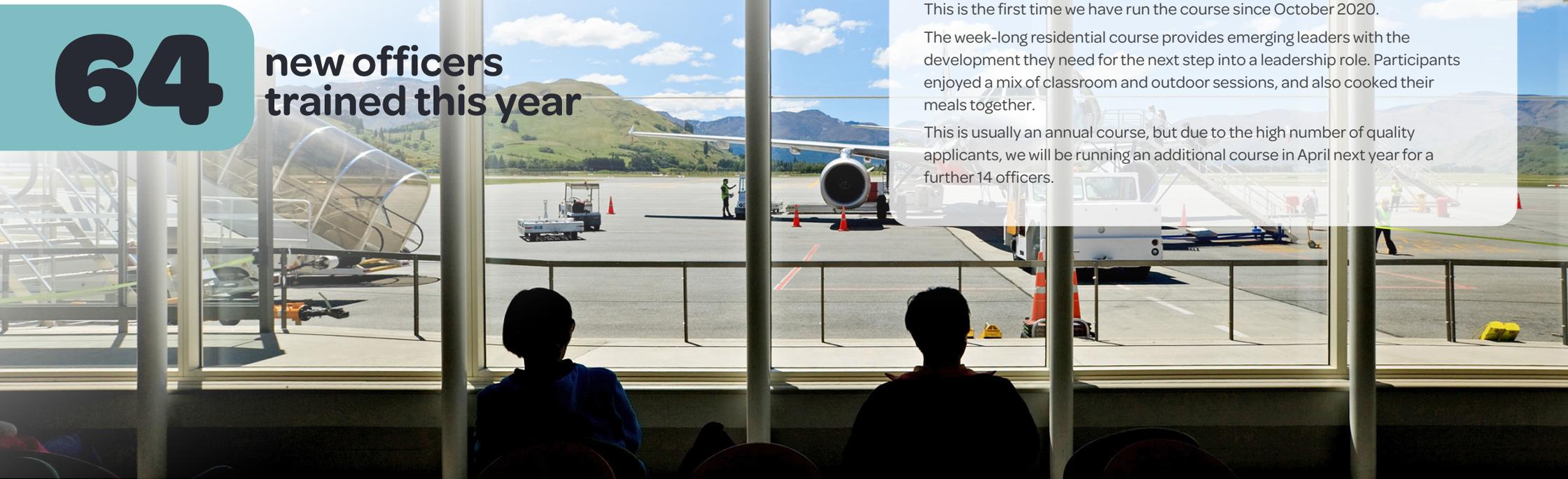
Leadership training builds capability

Fourteen quarantine officers attended our Action-Orientated Team Leadership course in October at Muriwai Beach, on Auckland's west coast (see above), as we continue to invest in building the capability of our officers.

This is the first time we have run the course since October 2020.

The week-long residential course provides emerging leaders with the development they need for the next step into a leadership role. Participants enjoyed a mix of classroom and outdoor sessions, and also cooked their meals together.

This is usually an annual course, but due to the high number of quality applicants, we will be running an additional course in April next year for a further 14 officers.



Canine recruits take next step

The latest litter from our detector dog breeding programme is making good progress toward joining our frontline biosecurity teams.

The nine beagle puppies, known as “P litter”, include five girls and four boys – Pippa, Polly, Pixie, Peggy, Pete, Pedro, Pluto, Padma and Pilot. Born in November last year, they are the offspring of working biosecurity detector dog Huia.

Until now, the puppies have been with foster families and (mostly) treated like normal dogs. In preparation for their future work in a busy airport, they’ve also been exposed to a variety of different environments and experiences.

To help meet the recent demand in the passenger pathway, three puppies have started their pre-training ahead of the rest. All going well, these aspiring detector dogs will be ready to graduate in February. The remaining puppies will start their training after Christmas, with graduation in March or April.

The puppies will need to demonstrate some special qualities in order to pass the pre-training. They’ll require a highly developed sense of smell, the desire to hunt, a strong food drive, athleticism and a strong work ethic. After pre-training graduation, they will be matched with a handler and then move on to more advanced training.

To help further bolster our detector dog numbers, we’re currently assessing a number of dogs from outside the breeding programme. We also have news that detector dog Neon is pregnant with our next litter of detector dogs, due in early December.

Interested in fostering a puppy? Check out our website for the [requirements and application process](#).



“P litter” – Pilot....



Pete....



and Pippa.

New trainee handlers

We’re pleased to announce that three of our quarantine officers have been selected for the dog handler training programme, which will begin in late November.

We currently have 27 handlers, with 22 based in Auckland, two in Queenstown, two in Christchurch and one in Wellington.

Three quarantine officers from the French Polynesia Ministry of Agriculture will also join the programme. Their training will be adapted to cater for their local requirements. We are providing them with three puppies from the P-litter.

NEW ZEALAND

Focus back on travellers

There's a lot happening in the passenger pathway as international travel takes off following the removal of COVID-19 restrictions.

Easing Auckland's passenger squeeze

An express lane at Auckland International Airport is helping reduce passenger congestion in the arrivals area while ensuring strong biosecurity protection.

The congestion has been due to a range of factors, including increased passenger numbers, airport staff shortages and flight delays, causing multiple flights to converge on the airport. This can see up to 1500 passengers arrive for screening at once.

After discussions with Auckland Airport, Biosecurity NZ re-established the express lane on 28 October for New Zealand and Australian passport holders with "nothing to declare". The lane was extended to other passport holders on 2 November.

The express lane is based on a well-established approach used before the pandemic. It allows processing of high passenger volumes without compromising biosecurity

effectiveness, as confirmed by previous passenger compliance surveys.

The way it works is passengers with nothing to declare are individually assessed by officers for biosecurity risk. If determined as low risk, they are directed to the new express lane. Passengers using the lane bypass baggage x-ray, but must be screened by a detector dog team.

Passengers assessed as higher risk undergo additional scrutiny, including x-ray screening and baggage searches. For example, those who have been in Bali within the last seven days must still go through the enhanced screening processes introduced after the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia.

Early results show the express lane is helping better manage passenger flows during peak times. In the first five days of operation, about 8500 passengers were successfully processed through the lane. We are currently processing around 2500 passengers a day with this approach.

The standard operating hours for the new lane are from 1pm to 8pm.



Entrance to new express lane at Auckland Airport.

Focus back on travellers...continued

Passenger compliance monitoring to restart

Compliance monitoring for arriving international travellers will start again this summer.

The survey involves randomly selecting travellers who have been through our clearance processes to undergo further checks. The monitoring is intended to provide assurance that our border controls are working as they should.

Due to low volumes of arriving passengers, the survey has been on hold since the beginning of the pandemic.

Our compliance target is 98.5%. The last survey, in 2019, showed 98.7% of air passengers were free of risk goods after passing through our checks.

Hand baggage trials

We are trialling dedicated airport lanes for travellers who only carry hand baggage and have nothing to declare.

The trials are underway in Auckland and Christchurch.

We are using our Rapiscan 920CT scanner for the Auckland Airport trial. Readers of **The Border Space** will be aware this unit is specially designed for hand baggage and can generate state-of-the-art 3D images. One of our most sophisticated 2D x-ray units (the Rapiscan 620DV) has been shifted to Christchurch Airport for the trial. This machine provides operators with x-ray images from two different angles, making it easier to detect threats.

The approach has the potential to offer speedier biosecurity clearance for passengers who travel lightly, as they will avoid queuing with people carrying checked-in baggage. Removal of these travellers from the main processing area will reduce congestion for other passengers.



Awards celebrate biosecurity heroes

Congratulations to all winners in the recent Biosecurity Awards, presented by Biosecurity Minister Damien O'Connor at a ceremony on 31 October.

The annual awards, which comprise 10 categories, recognise the outstanding contribution of individuals, communities, organisations, industry, iwi and kura in protecting New Zealand from pests and diseases.

Wilderlab took out the Supreme Award for its innovative technology eDNA. Using just a cup of water, the tool identifies the native and pest species present in waterways and on land. The technology is being widely used by regional councils and other government agencies for early detection of invasive organisms.

Damien O'Connor announced Phillip Karaitiana as winner of the Minister's Biosecurity Award. Team leader at Gisborne District Council, Phillip has dedicated 52 years to protecting the Wairoa and Gisborne regions from pests and diseases.

Special mention also goes to our colleagues at Auckland Airport, whose collective effort won the GIA Industry Award for creating a biosecurity culture across the airport.

Biosecurity has become a foundational value for Auckland Airport, thanks to raising awareness, training, new standards and creation of a biosecurity community. To date, over 10,000 people have completed the biosecurity training. Through this work supporting a strong border, Auckland Airport is helping keep New Zealand free from exotic pests and diseases. Keep up the good work!

We should also mention the Better Border Biosecurity Research Collaboration (B3), which took home the New Zealand Biosecurity Science Award. Involving crown research institutes, universities, and government border agencies, the group looks at ways to reduce the entry and establishment of new plant pests and diseases in New Zealand.

It was also great for our own border officers to receive a special recognition award for the outstanding work they do on the biosecurity frontline to protect New Zealand.

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



Top left: Phillip Karaitiana, winner of the Minister's Biosecurity Award for his commitment to New Zealand biosecurity.

Top right: New Zealand Biosecurity Science Award winner, Better Border Biosecurity (B3), for their Better Border Biosecurity Research Collaboration.

Middle left: Border Clearance Services staff receiving Special Recognition for Service.

Middle right: Wilderlab NZ Ltd, winner of the Mondiale VGL Innovation Award and the New Zealand Biosecurity Supreme Award.

Bottom left: GIA Industry Award winner Auckland Airport for "Creation of a biosecurity culture to make biosecurity matter".

From the frontline

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

Now we've seen it all...

You'd think that nothing would surprise us in biosecurity, but our officer was taken aback when faced with this unique keepsake (pictured below) in November.

The seized cat intestine from Nepal was declared by a woman arriving at Auckland Airport from Seoul. The intestine was a gift from her granddaughter, who had thoughtfully placed it in a locket for safe keeping.

Cat intestine jewellery certainly isn't something we see every day.



Drums sound alarm bells

The traditional Czech drums, pictured, were intercepted at the International Mail Centre in October, failing biosecurity requirements on several counts.

Not only were the drums made from rawhide, but the drumsticks were fashioned from branches with the potential to grow.



Single seed spotted

One of our x-ray operators at the International Mail Centre showed off their finely tuned detection skills in November by spotting a single cannabis seed in a parcel from the Netherlands.

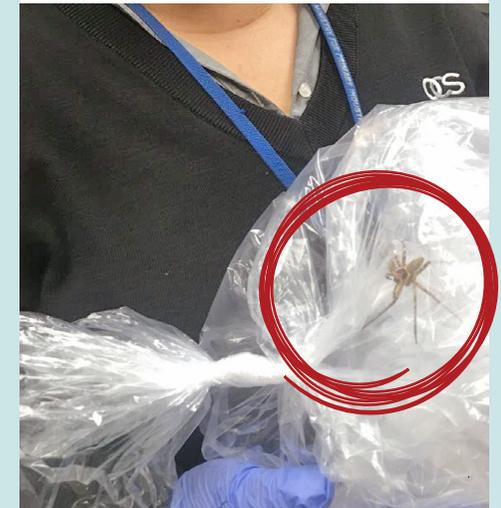
As the find involved a controlled drug, the parcel was referred to NZ Customs.

The cannabis seed appeared as a small orange dot on the x-ray image.



Runaway arachnid

Officers on duty at Auckland Airport recently got a fright when an extremely large spider (likely to be a Huntsman) crawled off the x-ray machine and ran across the floor. One of our support staff caught the runaway arachnid, securing it in a plastic bag.



Innocent mistake?

An almond tree sent from the United States turned heads among International Mail Centre staff in October for all the wrong reasons. The tree, complete with soil, was dutifully declared, but clearly breached biosecurity requirements, which bans the importation of live plants. The sender had no previous history of dodgy imports, so it was deemed an innocent mistake.



From the frontline continued

Monkey surprise

This surprised-looking stuffed Central American squirrel monkey was thoroughly checked by officers at the International Mail Centre after being declared in a package from the United States.

While the monkey was well taxidermised, it contained a few surprises of its own, including borer holes in the wooden display base.

Department of Conservation officers were also called to check the monkey's status under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). CITES is an international agreement between governments to ensure international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species. The officers confirmed the monkey was listed on CITES, therefore requiring an export and import permit, which was lacking.



More than meets the eye

Declared as “Water get beans”, a package at Auckland’s International Mail Centre was found to contain seedlings nestled in a bag of clear beads, perhaps designed to camouflage the plant material.

The clear beads showed up as organic material under the x-ray, and the mention of “beans” on the declaration form meant the package was always going to be pulled aside.

Closer inspection by our biosecurity officers revealed the seedlings. These were later identified as the valuable houseplant *Aglaonema pictum*, which fetch around \$500 per plant.



Nothing to see here

All requirements were met for this walrus skull, which was sent from Canada. However, its history makes for interesting reading...

The walrus was “harvested” in 1918 by a Captain Phillips on Canada’s Baffin Island. It was later sold by his grandson to an antique dealer.



Gas detector upgrade underway

Our technology team has started upgrading the gas detectors used to protect officers from fumigants associated with imported goods.

The equipment detects oxygen levels and common quarantine gases, such as methyl bromide, hydrogen cyanide and phosphine, with an alarm telling officers to leave the area immediately or not to enter.

The upgrade will future proof our gas detectors, ensuring they meet WorkSafe New Zealand’s updated Workplace Exposure Standards (WES), which have lowered levels for methyl bromide and hydrogen cyanide. In the interim, we have adjusted the alarm settings on our existing detectors to meet the new WES.

We currently use MiniRAE and MultiRAE lite gas detectors. The upgrade involves replacing the aging MiniRAEs with new detectors that will have the added advantage of multiple sensors. This means we can use the same device to detect a broader range of gases. The MultiRAE lites are being revamped with new sensors to meet the updated WES.



New MultiRAE lite gas detectors with upgraded sensors to meet the new WorkSafe New Zealand standards.

Border activity for September/October 2022

	Sept-21	Sept-22	Oct-21	Oct-22
Passenger				
Total arrivals	8,036	333,505	10,748	377,872
NZ/Australia	3,909	250,414	5,956	266,784
Rest of world	4,127	83,091	4,792	111,088
Risk items seized	228	8,891	264	9,115
Risk items treated or destroyed	229	8,476	247	8,561
Infringement notices	3	275	4	330
Mail				
Mail items screened	1,576,442	1,215,958	1,757,723	1,050,985
Mail items requiring further inspection	3,436	2,086	3,449	2,295
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	692	406	818	397
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	68,722	62,350	55,774	55,330
Sea containers inspected	2,021	2,407	1,544	1,544
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	22,826	19,719	22,711	18,972
Cargo lines inspected	7,173	6,350	6,478	5,500
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	1,610	1,146	1,516	980



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Mike Inglis
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