



The BorderSpace

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



Haere mai and thank you!

Biosecurity New Zealand is thanking international travellers who arrived during the peak Christmas and New Year period for their efforts in helping to protect our \$57 billion primary sector export industry.

“The vast majority of people passing through biosecurity checks are doing the right thing, and it is great to see international passengers doing all they can to help keep New Zealand free of pests and diseases,” said Commissioner, North Mike Inglis.

In December, Biosecurity New Zealand staff screened 600,463 arriving air passengers, an increase of almost 100,000 on the same period last year.

“Our staff have worked hard to deliver the best possible travel experience for the many thousands of people travelling to New Zealand for the summer holiday period. They’ve done a fantastic job to date and we thank them for their efforts.”

In September, Biosecurity New Zealand recently introduced express lanes for low-risk passengers, additional detector dog handlers and their dogs, more quarantine officers in Auckland, and new biosecurity hosts to help passengers navigate the biosecurity system.



DECEMBER 2023
BIOSECURITY STAFF SCREENED
600,463
ARRIVING AIR PASSENGERS
100,000 MORE THAN DECEMBER 2022

Chosen for their ability to engage easily and proactively with people – particularly families with children and visitors with limited English – the hosts are responsible for raising awareness about biosecurity risks and providing guidance on our border requirements to passengers at arrivals and departures.

“Our hosts have been a welcome addition during the busy season – greeting arriving passengers and ensuring they know how to navigate the biosecurity system and what to expect when they reach our officers.”

Hosts are now on duty at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown airports and feedback has been very positive. “We’re initially trialling the concept during the peak summer and early autumn travelling season.”

“At the end of the trial, we will decide whether biosecurity hosts become a fixture on our frontlines – either permanently or seasonally.”

These new initiatives helped to keep the average processing time for arriving passengers passing through biosecurity at Auckland International Airport at just under eight minutes during December and January.

Biosecurity New Zealand is continuing to work with Auckland International Airport and other stakeholders to improve the experience of travellers arriving at the airport.

Our Biosecurity New Zealand teams worked hard over the summer to ensure we kept pests and diseases out of New Zealand and processed passengers efficiently. Watch the story to find out about our preparations.



Above: Four-legged Fern and Archie along with their handlers, Mark and Kristen, are members of the Biosecurity New Zealand team keeping Aotearoa safe from unwanted pests and diseases.

Hosts at work in New Zealand airports raising awareness of biosecurity risk and providing guidance on border requirements.

New recruits meet rising demand

Our frontline ranks of quarantine officers and detector dog handlers – and their four-legged charges – continued to grow during November and December in anticipation of the pre-Christmas mail rush and peak international visitor season.

In November, 23 new quarantine officers began their site induction at Auckland Airport while four new detector dog teams joined the frontline – two in Auckland and one each in Wellington and Christchurch.

This followed the arrival, in October, of a litter of four-legged detection recruits – S litter (below). Mistral delivered four healthy pups – three girls and a boy. All are progressing well and, as they grow, will gradually be introduced to the environments and disciplines that will make them top-class pest and disease detectors.

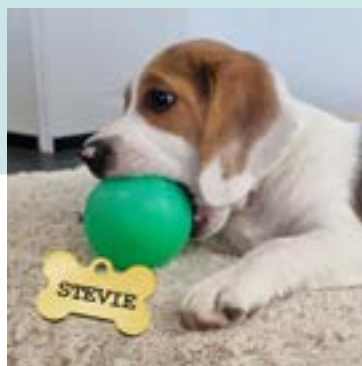
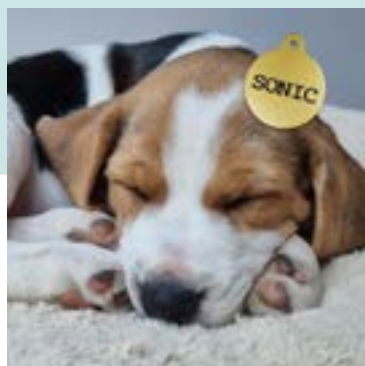
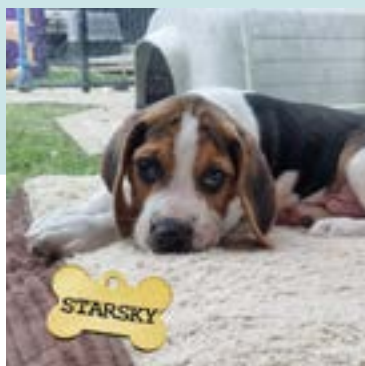
Congratulations to all officers and handlers on successfully completing their intensive training programmes. Welcome to the Biosecurity New Zealand whānau!



Twenty-three new Auckland-based quarantine officers celebrate their graduation with senior members of the Biosecurity New Zealand team.



Our latest detector dog handler graduates – qualified and raring to go.



Introducing the pups of the S-litter and future Biosecurity New Zealand detector dogs – Sage, Starsky, Sonic, and Stevie.

First diploma graduates full of praise

Eileen-Rita Folwell and Fin Lambermon are among the first to graduate with a Diploma of Border and Biosecurity – a new qualification we developed jointly with Massey University to upskill our frontline people.

Eileen-Rita and Fin say the part-time study, completed over three-and-a-half years, has given them new knowledge, perspectives and confidence that are directly transferrable to the frontline.

“In my role as quarantine officer, I felt I had a skill gap not coming from a scientific background, unlike a lot of my colleagues,” says Eileen-Rita.

“Although we are supported and work alongside world class labs and diagnostic teams, when you’re on the ground discussing pests and disease and symptoms of disease, you feel a responsibility.

“You are representing Biosecurity New Zealand and you want to have those conversations with confidence. The study has given me that.”

Fin, who was also a quarantine officer when she began studying but is now a relationship manager with the Government Industry Agreement (GIA) Partnerships in Readiness and Response Services, agrees.

“When I was working in quarantine, some of the earlier papers, especially, helped give me an appreciation of the bigger picture of what we operate under and why we do what we do,” she says.

Both say they would recommend the diploma to anyone working in the border space.

“It’s not mandatory, but I think it should be. That’s how good it is!” says Fin.

Fin and Eileen-Rita were awarded recognition certificates at new officer graduation ceremonies in Auckland in early December.



Qualifications a pathway to advancement

Fifteen members of our border team graduated with either a diploma or certificate in Border and Biosecurity in 2023.

Of the nine diploma graduates, five are now senior quarantine officers and the other four (including Eileen-Rita and Fin) have moved into senior advisory roles elsewhere in Biosecurity New Zealand.

Of the six who completed their certificate studies, five are now senior quarantine officers and the other has moved into an advisory role.

Congratulations to all our diploma and certificate graduates for your hard work and success!

We will be enrolling a new cohort of up to 30 biosecurity staff into the qualification in 2024. It is an open qualification, so anyone can apply. More information on the [diploma](#) and [certificate](#) is available on the [Massey University website](#).

Brown marmorated stink bug alert

Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) is a highly invasive pest that is known to damage more than 300 plant hosts. We don’t want it in New Zealand!

The bug starts to gather in enclosed spaces in late autumn, continuing over winter. This increases the likelihood of it hitchhiking to New Zealand during our summer in imported cargo, particularly vehicles, machinery and equipment.

Our economy would take a major hit if BMSB established in New Zealand. In 2018, the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research estimated the value of horticulture exports could drop by up \$4.2 million as the result of a BMSB incursion.

Our 2023/24 summer campaign runs from November to March, targeting people and organisations most likely to find BMSB in their normal activities. For summer, this includes online shoppers receiving items from overseas and gardeners. You might have seen the ads on the Metservice website or social media.

So far this season (as of 8 February) Biosecurity New Zealand has detected 82 live BMSB – mostly in sea and air cargo.

People who think they have spotted a BMSB are asked to catch it, snap it (take a photo) and report it using Biosecurity New Zealand’s exotic pests and diseases hotline 0800 80 99 66.



Sails lower on busy yacht season

It was another busy season for our teams managing biosecurity risks associated with yacht and other small vessel arrivals. Here are a few of the highlights.

Training strengthens capabilities

Thirteen of our officers attended full-day small vessel inspection training sessions before the season began, upping our biosecurity capability at key ports of arrival.

The training, a mix of classroom and practical sessions, involved officers who hadn't received any yacht inspection training before, officers from regions outside Northland and Auckland, and members of the team deployed to Opuia for the peak yacht season. As a result, we are well-equipped to manage small vessel arrivals around the country smoothly and efficiently.

We extend a big thank you to the New Zealand Defence Force Navy for the use of their yachts at Bayswater Marina during the practical training sessions.

Underwater camera joins inspection toolkit

Our new underwater camera (UWC) is now in operation at Opuia and has already proven its worth, contributing to at least two yacht haul outs due to above-threshold levels of biofouling.

Officers received training in the use of the UWC during their small vessel inspection training, and their feedback is helping us to improve usability.

A second UWC, for use in Auckland, will be tested in the near future. It features slightly different technology to the Opuia camera.

Pacific briefings pay dividends

As in past years, we sent officers to Fiji and Tonga to brief gathered yachties about our requirements for arrival in New Zealand and how they could best prepare for inspection and clearance.

Over several days, our team distributed brochures and held one-on-one conversations with yachties and associated local business leaders, including boat yard owners and marina managers.

Our officers in Opuia reported that their offshore engagements with yachties who had attended the Pacific briefings were very positive. Their stores were well-organised and overall compliance levels were very high.

Thank you!

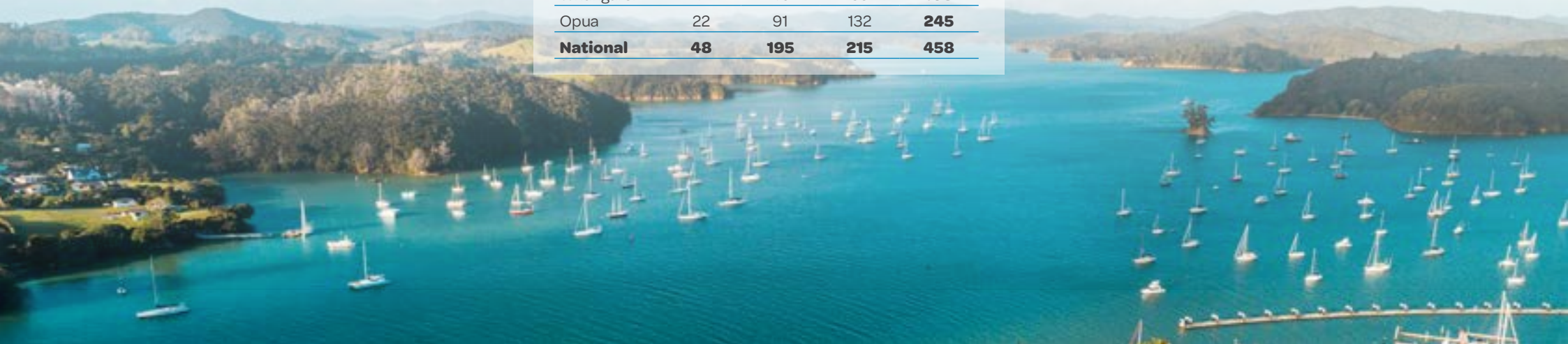
A special thank you goes to the Northland regional quarantine officers for their support during a smooth and successful Opuia yacht season.



Members of our team receive training in the use of a new underwater camera recently added to our biofouling inspection toolkit.

Yacht arrivals during spring 2023

	Sept 23	Oct 23	Nov 23	Total
Auckland	15	52	24	91
Whangarei	7	46	55	108
Opuia	22	91	132	245
National	48	195	215	458



Biofouling rules protect our unique environment

Cruise ships visiting New Zealand this summer are doing a good job of meeting our strong biofouling standards and protecting our unique marine environment.

We know that almost 90% of the exotic marine species already here likely arrived as marine growth on the submerged surfaces of international vessels. These pests can adversely impact our environment, unique marine ecosystems, aquaculture industry and economy.

This season to date, only one of the 54 cruise vessels expected to arrive here for approximately 1100 port visits did not enter New Zealand waters because it was unable to meet our biofouling standards. Three other non-compliant vessels had restricted itineraries and were subject to further education.

Biosecurity New Zealand has been working closely with cruise companies to help them understand and meet our biofouling rules, which are among the strongest in the world for good reason – they ensure visitors and New Zealanders will enjoy our special marine areas, such as Fiordland, for generations to come.

Of the 40 vessels assessed for biofouling this season, 36 have passed their assessment prior to arriving in New Zealand. This includes two new cruise operators who visited New Zealand for the first time this season and complied well with biofouling regulations.

Raising awareness of biofouling requirements

Since last season, we've worked hard to alert cruise lines about their biosecurity requirements, including the need to comply with New Zealand's biofouling rules.

We continue to engage regularly with operators throughout the season. There's high awareness about our biofouling rules among operators, and a keenness to comply.

Cruise lines must demonstrate they meet a range of biosecurity requirements – including biofouling – before they're given approval to voyage to New Zealand.

We've been asking cruise lines to submit biofouling documentation and craft risk management plans as early as possible. This allows early notification of any cleaning requirements, helping to avoid voyage delays.

We appreciate that in-water cleaning of cruise ship's hull is a difficult and complex task often dictated by the weather. We are grateful for the industry's support to help keep our marine environment free from pest organisms.

How all vessel operators can comply

Operators of any vessel type can meet our biofouling requirements by doing one of the following (and having documentation to prove it):

- undertaking continual hull maintenance using best practices (recommended for short-stay vessels)
- inspecting and, if necessary, cleaning the hull and niche areas within 30 days before arriving in New Zealand (recommended for long-stay vessels)
- booking an appointment for the vessel to be hauled

out and cleaned by an MPI-approved treatment supplier within 24 hours of arrival (recommended for vessels coming to New Zealand for refit or repair).

If a vessel can't meet the standard using one of these measures, the operator may develop a craft risk management plan that details alternate but equivalent measures to manage biofouling.

See more at [Biofouling management | NZ Government \(mpi.govt.nz\)](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biofouling-management)



Maritime phase 1 goes live

After successful trials, New Zealand Traveller Declaration (NZTD) Maritime Phase 1 went live on 12 December 2023, giving travellers on small craft, cargo, specialist, fishing, diplomatically cleared and New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) vessels the option to complete their arrival declaration digitally.

As a result, our border teams are now processing both digital and paper declarations from travellers arriving on these types of vessels. And if travellers have not made a declaration, our teams encourage and support them to choose the digital option.

Work is ongoing to fully implement NZTD on all NZDF vessels, which arrive at the border infrequently. NZTD operations on NZDF vessels were successfully trialled on 6 and 7 December. Border agencies worked well together to ensure a smooth clearance process for crews, and lessons were learned that will be applied for future processing of Royal New Zealand Navy vessels.

Cruise ship trials a success

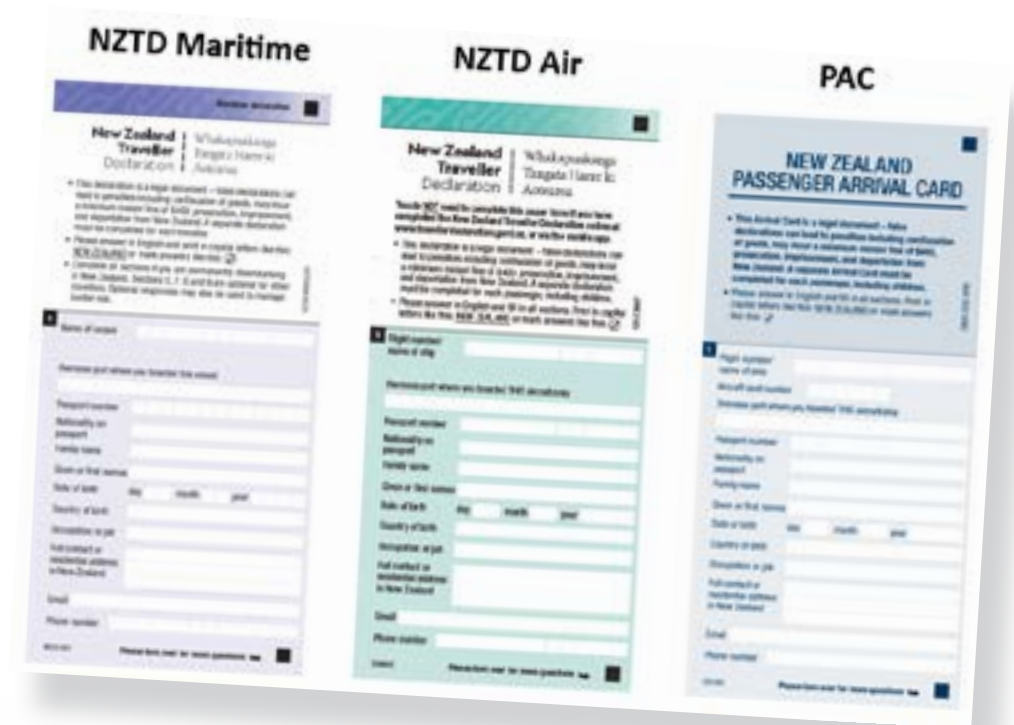
In November 2023, a second trial of NZTD for cruise ship passengers took place with the support of P&O Cruises.

NZTD was offered to 2300 passengers and crew on P&O's Pacific Explorer, which arrived at the Port of Auckland. Over 1000 people completed the digital declaration, which is a pleasing result.

New procedures for processing passengers, put in place after the first trial, helped quarantine officers focus on travellers with something to declare. This reduced queues and processing times.

Among the improvements were:

- wayfinding stickers on travellers' passports – red for something to declare and green for nothing to declare – and new signage to guide travellers to the correct lane
- one-swipe direct exit for travellers with nothing to declare.



The wayfinding stickers worked particularly well, and no undeclared seizures were identified by the biosecurity detector dogs or random verification inspections. These processes were specific to this trial and are being evaluated ahead of further trials.

A third trial was conducted in Auckland on 28 January 2024, this time with the *Norwegian Spirit*.

Of the 1640 passengers on board, 829 submitted their declarations online via NZTD. The improvements were refined to ensure that compliant passengers progress through the clearance process with minimal interaction.

The dog teams had a busy morning screening the ship's passengers. High

levels of biosecurity compliance resulted in just a single detection for the dogs.

Further cruise trials ahead

Further NZTD cruise trials are planned for 2024.

We are planning additional trials out of Shed 10 and new trials at Shed 20 in Auckland. These will be complemented by trials on board ships at Lyttelton, Port Chalmers and Bluff, between late January and March.

A huge thank you to everyone taking part in these trials. Your insights and feedback help us ensure the system works well for all.

From the frontline

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

Appearances can deceive

A passenger arriving in Christchurch from Samoa did the right thing and declared these critters, which apparently are far nicer to eat than they look and smell! They're palolo worms – aka 'Caviar of the South Pacific'. They live in crevices in coral reefs and can grow up to 40cm long. They can be eaten raw or cooked and are considered a delicacy in some Pacific communities.

As the worms were dead and did not pose a biosecurity risk, they were cleared for entry.



Unbridled surprise

A New Zealand resident returning from a trip through Europe presented this, along with other food products and souvenirs, at the inspection bench in Queenstown. When the passenger discovered it was horse meat, they were only too happy to leave it behind!



Spooky but safe

In the spirit of Halloween, these two preserved creepy-crawlies (Bolivian black velvet tarantulas) arrived in the mail in early November. They met all biosecurity requirements and are not on the CITES list, so were forwarded to the importer.



An idea best left ungerminated

A passenger arriving in Auckland from Vietnam believed they could get away with concealing an assortment of seeds throughout their clothing and in the lining of their suitcase. The passenger was caught and an infringement issued. The seeds will never take root in New Zealand soil.



Tools down for carpenter ants

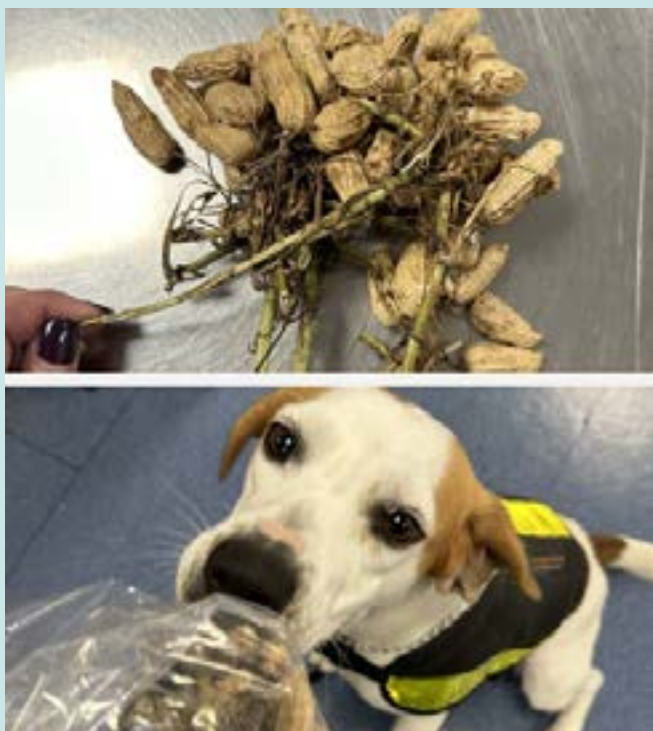
Inspection of a yacht entering Whangarei in November revealed a quintet of live female exotic carpenter ants on board. The unwelcome hitchhikers were captured and the vessel was thoroughly treated before berthing.



From the frontline... continued

Border zebra crossing

Declared by a passenger arriving in Queenstown from South Africa via Dubai, these two zebra skins are worth a tidy \$3000.00 plus. They were clean and are not on the CITES list, so were released to cross the border (after looking both ways first...)



Undeclared, detected – and destroyed!

In Wellington, detector dog Fritz indicated on a passenger in the express lane who was found with undeclared dried fruit in a milk container. This was great work by the team and a good example of the system working well. The passenger was infringed and the fruit destroyed.

Pippa goes nuts

A passenger from Vanuatu arrived in Auckland with a bag that made detector dog Pippa go, well, nuts. Inside the bag was a whole vine of peanuts, which was duly destroyed. Great work, Pippa!

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

Biosecurity protects your business, the environment and the economy.

Join now
thisisus.nz/biosecurity-business-pledge

Border activity for October/November/December 2023

	Oct-22	Oct-23	Nov-22	Nov-23	Dec-22	Dec-23
Passenger						
Total arrivals	377,872	544,370	422,598	534,268	500,000	600,463
NZ/Australia	266,784	360,090	259,136	301,874	299,023	325,178
Rest of world	111,088	184,280	163,462	232,394	201,926	275,285
Risk items seized	9,115	10,107	9,588	10,223	9,750	11,158
Risk items treated or destroyed	8,561	7,139	9,102	7,291	9,454	7,661
Infringement notices	330	688	467	847	511	883
Mail						
Mail items screened	1,050,985	1,056,181	1,342,457	1,467,816	1,902,561	1,927,491
Mail items requiring further inspection	2,295	1,467	2,452	1,727	2,316	1,987
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	397	185	482	328	413	375
Sea Containers						
Sea containers arrivals	55,330	57,969	65,747	63,528	65,130	57,576
Sea containers inspected	1,544	2,478	2,251	3,429	2,992	2,853
Cargo						
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	18,972	20,030	21,140	20,540	20,178	19,287
Cargo lines inspected	5,500	5,543	5,728	5,543	5,506	5,034
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	980	1,147	1,094	889	1,173	1,087



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