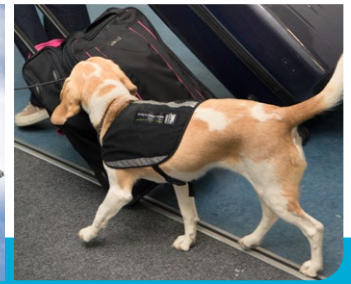




Biosecurity New Zealand
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

The BorderSpace

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



Issue 62 | June 2025

Regional airports almost ready to go!

International flights are set to return to Hamilton and Dunedin airports in June. We've been working closely with Waikato Regional Airport Ltd, Dunedin International Airport Ltd, and other border agencies to ensure the smooth reintroduction of these services.

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Hamilton Airport first



Hamilton Airport is preparing for its first scheduled international arrival on 16 June. This will see the start of daily Jetstar flights from Australia. It will be Hamilton's first regular trans-Tasman service since 2010.

We've been working with partners to ensure the design, construction, fit-out, and resourcing of the airport's biosecurity area provides a good passenger experience and allows appropriate screening of travellers. We have also been helping the airport company meet its regulatory requirements.

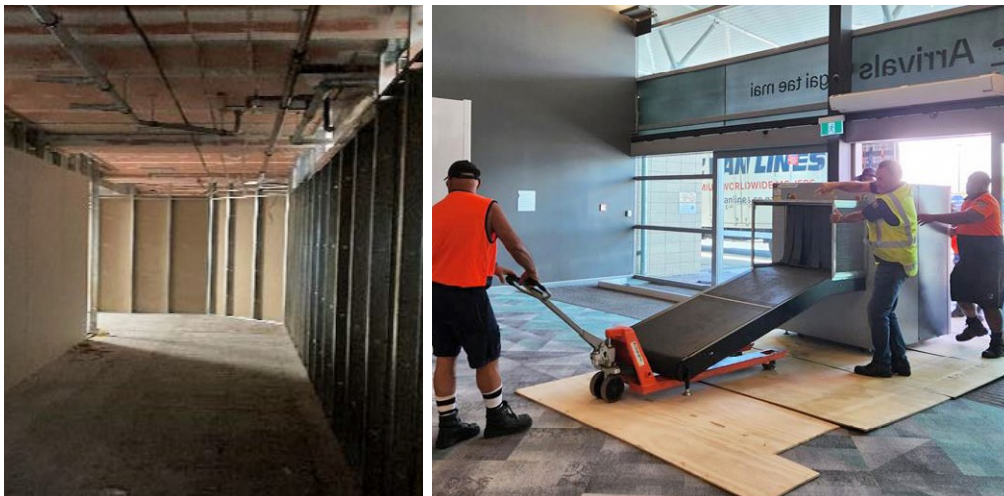
Construction of the international terminal area was completed on 17 April. At the time of writing, key equipment like our baggage-screening x-ray unit, risk assessment

podiums, and search benches are onsite and will soon be installed. The x-ray machine was sourced from the recently closed International Mail Centre.

Regulatory approvals are pretty much completed. The airport has been officially ticked off as a Port of First Arrival (PoFA), and both the Biosecurity Control Area (our operating space) and the airport's transitional facilities are approved.

Staffing is expected to be confirmed and rostered shortly. Detector dog teams from Auckland will assist with passenger processing as required.

An operational readiness exercise in early June will ensure all systems are go for the big day.



Left: The new express lane under construction at Hamilton Airport; right, the former mail-centre x-ray machine arrives at Hamilton Airport in April.



Photo: Paul McCredie

Dunedin Airport next

Dunedin Airport is on track to resume international services on 24 June, with trans-Tasman flights starting three times a week. The airport stopped scheduled international services in 2020 when borders closed due to the pandemic.

Dunedin's international terminal is still in place, making it relatively easier to restart border operations. In addition, the site already has an x-ray unit ready for use.

New search benches were delivered in late April. A new baggage roller system

will be in place to work with the x-ray machine by early June. Cabling and IT installation has been completed.

Dunedin has met all regulatory requirements. We accepted a PoFA audit of the site in November 2024. A transitional facility audit was completed and accepted in early May.

We have officers in place raring to go. Interest in new Dunedin-based positions was very high, with nearly 140 applications.

A full trial run-through is set for 9 June.

Biosecurity game changer officially opens

NZ Post's \$250 million Auckland Processing Centre (APC) was officially opened as the country's international gateway for parcels and mail on 8 May.

Minister for Biosecurity Andrew Hoggard joined Minister for State-Owned Enterprises Simeon Brown and Minister of Customs Casey Costello at the new facility in Wiri for the opening ceremony.

The facility houses Biosecurity New Zealand and NZ Customs under the same roof as NZ Post for the first time. It features shared cutting-edge scanning and data systems that enable faster processing and stronger biosecurity protection (see previous issue of [The Border Space](#)).

Co-designed by the three agencies, the facility is built to meet the demands of the booming e-commerce market, with capacity to process up to 30,000 parcels an hour. Biosecurity checks are integrated into the parcel flow.

The APC replaces the former International Mail Centre near Auckland Airport.

Top: The new facility can process up to 30,000 parcels an hour.

Centre: Minister for State Owned Enterprises Simeon Brown and Dame Paula Rebstock, NZ Post Board Chair, unveil a plaque to commemorate the official opening of the APC.

Bottom: Our very own Mike Inglis (Commissioner, North, Biosecurity New Zealand) talks to media about the biosecurity benefits of the new APC.



Top: Demonstrating the new inspection room to Minister for Biosecurity Andrew Hoggard (centre).

Bottom: Minister for State-Owned Enterprises Simeon Brown addresses the media scrum at the APC opening ceremony.

“IT ONLY TAKES ONE” goes wider

Our refreshed border biosecurity campaign is reaching further afield, with targeted ads now running in the UK and soon in the US.

This marks the next phase of the campaign, which reminds travellers that it only takes one risk item to do serious harm to New Zealand. It aims to get travellers thinking about biosecurity before they even pack – especially items like food, boots, and tents.

In the UK, digital ads are now playing in the major airports of London, Manchester, and Birmingham, as well as online for people searching for travel to New Zealand. Instagram is an important channel for getting the message out, as many UK travellers use it to plan trips.

Advertising in the US will begin shortly. And, in June, the campaign will expand to China and India. Ahead of this, our campaigns team is testing messaging, visuals, and translations with travellers to ensure they’re clear and effective. Dirty boots, for example, have tested well with international audiences.

The campaign will eventually cover ten key countries, including France, Germany, the Philippines, and Korea.

This global rollout builds on the first stage of the campaign, launched during the summer holidays,



which focused on trans-Tasman travellers and returning New Zealanders. It included new signage at Australian airports and – for the first time – digital signs in New Zealand airports reminding Kiwis to think about biosecurity before returning home.

The public awareness work builds on previous campaigns encouraging travellers to leave risky items at home, or to declare or dispose of them on arrival.



Stink bug tally down

Another brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) season is done and dusted.

As reported in previous issues of **The Border Space**, the 2024/25 high-risk season has been quieter than most.

There were 38 live detections between September and April, compared with 111 in the 2023/24 season.

The cargo pathway again saw high numbers of dead BMSB (642), highlighting the importance of our offshore treatment and cleaning requirements for high-risk goods such as vehicles, parts, and machinery.

BMSB can damage a wide range of crops and fruit trees. It has aggressively invaded the US and Europe and could establish in New Zealand.

Argentinian detection

A significant development this season was the detection of BMSB in Argentina. Authorities reported the discovery of seven adult bugs in Buenos Aires in December.

It is the first time the invasive pest has been reported in that country. Needless to say, we are closely monitoring the situation. New Zealand currently imports very little from Argentina and, to date, we have seen no evidence of BMSB in imported cargo from that country.

The UK is another “watchlist” country following recent detections. There is no imminent risk to New Zealand, as the known population is currently low and localised.

SEPT 2024 – APRIL 2025

38 live bugs

111 same time last year

VMP import health standard under review

Biosecurity New Zealand is reviewing the vehicles, machinery and parts import health standard, which sets out the rules for bringing in a cargo type that is a favourite hiding place for BMSB.

Here are some of the changes being considered:

- Updating the list of countries required to treat goods for brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB). In particular, we are likely to add Uzbekistan, where the pest is now established.
- Strengthening biosecurity requirements for used boats imported as cargo. This may include requiring water ballast systems to undergo decontamination treatment.
- Aligning import requirements for used parts and whole machinery. This change means used parts from outdoor machinery, along with targeted indoor machinery, would require a cleaning certificate year-round, but only need to be treated during the BMSB risk season.
- Standardising import requirements for imported used parts across different sea cargo types. The same rules would apply whether the cargo arrived as a whole container, consolidated with other shipments, or uncontainerised. The aim is to simplify the requirements and reduce unnecessary use of fumigants.

The proposed changes will be published in full as part of consultation in August. We are keen to have the standard updated by the end of 2025.

If you have any comments or questions about the review, please feel free to contact our standards team at standards@mpi.govt.nz.

Shout-out to all

We'd like to give a shout-out to everyone involved in keeping BMSB out of New Zealand since the beginning of the season — from our own officers to transitional facility staff, ship crews, industry people promoting vigilance among growers, and many more.

It has been a collective effort to intercept, contain, and report BMSB findings. The information we get from this joint effort allows us to assess the effectiveness of our biosecurity interventions, including whether approved treatment providers and offshore systems are working as they should. It also allows us to identify new risk countries, cargo types, and suppliers of interest, and to respond quickly to detections.

BMSB numbers (provisional)

1 September 2024 – 30 April 2025

	2023/24	2024/25
Total BMSB	1333	1303
Live	111	38
Dead	1222	1265
Total detection events	245	200

Live BMSB by pathway

	2023/24	2024/25
Air Cargo	7	7
Cargo	29	14
Mail	1	0
Passenger	52	14
Vessel	21	3
Unknown	1	0



**BIOSECURITY
BUSINESS
PLEDGE**
KO TĀTOU

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.

bbpledge.nz



Clean cruise ships

It has been encouraging to see biofouling compliance continue to improve during the 2024/25 summer cruise season.

From October to May, Biosecurity New Zealand assessed 45 cruise ships for excessive marine growth on their hulls and other submerged surfaces.

Of these, only three were identified with biofouling issues. All were able to provide further evidence to show compliance with the rules, with only one requiring cleaning.

Overall, it's been a great summer. Cruise operators continue to prioritise biofouling management. We have been in close contact with operators to ensure they understand and follow New Zealand's biofouling rules, which are among the toughest in the world.

In the 2022/23 season, following the resumption of international cruise voyages after the pandemic, 11 vessels didn't meet our standards. Of these, three cleaned their hulls prior to arrival and completed their itineraries. The other eight faced itinerary restrictions.

Last season – 2023/24 – the number of non-compliant vessels dropped to just five.

So, compliance is trending upwards. It's clear the close working relationship we have established with the cruise industry is really paying off.

Biofouling is a significant biosecurity risk – about 90% of marine pests hitch a ride into New Zealand on the hulls of international vessels, potentially harming our environment, aquaculture industry, and economy.

In 2014, New Zealand was the first country to roll out a national biofouling standard.

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**NON-COMPLIANT
VESSELS**

2024/25 **3**

2022/23 **11** 2023/24 **5**



Topside update

Cruise ship biosecurity also applies to what's above the waterline...

As with underwater requirements, there was strong “topside” compliance during the summer cruise season, supported by excellent engagement with the industry.

Many cruise vessels visited New Zealand for the first time this season. Our teams worked closely with these newcomers to enhance their onboard biosecurity practices.

All cruise operators who opted for the Recognised Cruise Line Programme (RCLP) this season gained full approval. Three operators instead chose the full clearance process. The RCLP allows reduced gangway checks of passengers for operators who can demonstrate strong biosecurity.

With RCLP audits for the season nearly complete, only four corrective actions have been issued – these related to refuse and pest management matters.

We have now seen good topside compliance for consecutive years, following many years of constructive collaboration with the industry.

This season, we surveyed cruise operators for their views on our auditing process, communication, and performance. We received positive and supportive feedback – thank you to those who responded.

We continue to strengthen our biosecurity capability for managing the cruise pathway. Two of our team members recently became authorised biosecurity auditors for cruise ships, giving our auditing programme greater flexibility and coverage.



New evidence requirements

New minimum evidence requirements are now in place for international vessels, including cruise ships, to demonstrate compliance with biofouling regulations.

Coming into force in April, the new requirements were introduced under changes to the Craft Risk Management Standard in October 2023, giving the shipping industry an 18-month lead-in period to ensure compliance.

The changes include:

- New labelling and timestamping requirements for images and videos.
- A requirement for images and video to be sufficiently clear to identify biofouling types.
- A requirement for vessel operators to identify underwater areas that cannot be assessed or surveyed.

During the lead-in period, Biosecurity New Zealand has been assessing inspection reports with the minimum evidence requirements in mind. From this, we know most vessels are already compliant.

The new rules can be found under Schedules 2 and 3 of the Craft Risk Management Standard for Vessels: **Vessels - Craft Risk Management Standard**



Digital passenger pathway moves closer

We are continuing to work towards digital biosecurity processing for low-risk air passengers.

The plan is to use information from digital declarations to identify low-risk passengers and enable them to be directed to airport express lanes.

This approach will help to facilitate passenger processing while maintaining strong biosecurity protections.

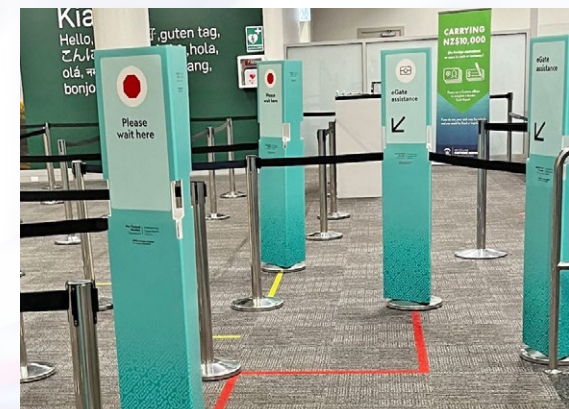
Ultimately, it could involve the use of an electronic marshalling system that, in addition to declaration information, will use biometric technology to identify and direct passengers to appropriate biosecurity checks.

In the interim, there's a lot going on to reduce manual processing for airport passengers.

Low-risk control points (LRCPs)

We currently have LRCPs in use at Auckland and Christchurch airports for processing passengers who have completed a digital declaration and have nothing to declare. If a passport scan confirms the passenger is low risk, they can be directed to the airport express lane without further questioning.

We have been trialling different locations for the LRCP, including placing it at the top of the express lane. We have also explored a self-service model, where the passenger – rather than an officer – scans



the passport. So far, we have seen very good processing rates at LRCPs.

Nearly 15% of passengers arriving in Christchurch during April were processed at an LRCP, and just over 3% in Auckland. Given we know that 80% of arriving passengers pose little biosecurity risk, the approach has huge potential to improve the customer experience.

Clear direction

Passengers need clear direction on how to navigate our processes. To this end, we are working with other border agencies and airports to align signage and other wayfinding across the country. We want wayfinding to have the same layout, look and feel at all international airports.

At the same time, we want to be able to send electronic notifications to passengers who have completed digital declarations – both via text messages and “push” notifications using airport wi-fi networks.

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Group processing

We're also looking to streamline the clearance process by allowing group declarations. This could mean one person in a group completes a digital declaration that covers the entire group, and only one passport would need to be presented.

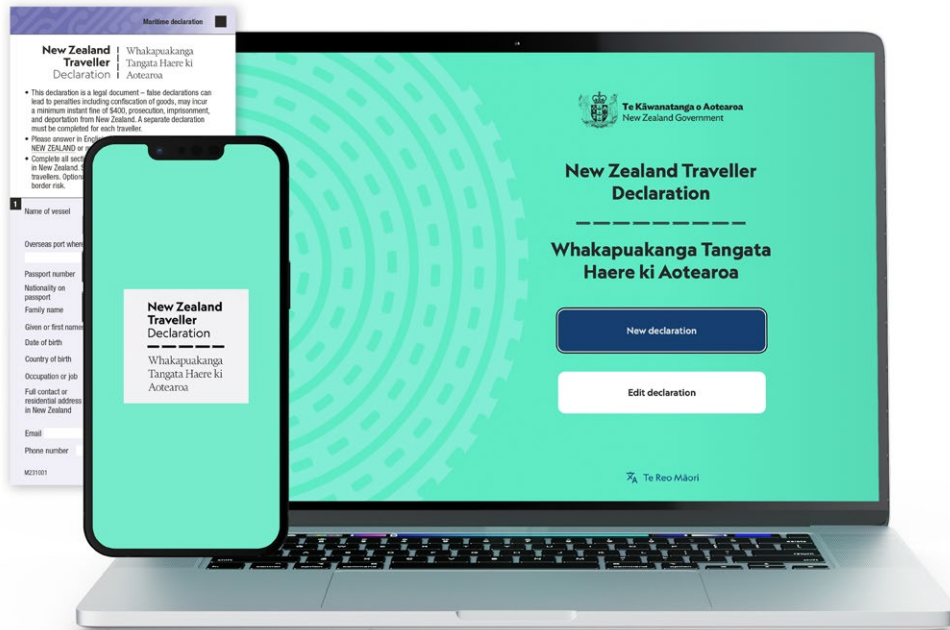
NZTD provides the foundation

The latest stats show that 67% of travellers are using digital declarations. We want to see that number grow.

Introduced under the New Zealand Traveller Declaration (NZTD) in 2023, digital declarations are the foundation for what we're doing to improve Biosecurity New Zealand's airport processes.

More information about NZTD and digital declarations is available at the [NZ traveller declaration website](#).

67% OF TRAVELLERS USING DIGITAL DECLARATIONS



X-ray upgrade

We're about to kick off a major upgrade of our airport x-ray machines, which are used to screen baggage for biosecurity threats.

Most of our current x-ray machines are more than 10 years old and are approaching their use-by date.

We've already been out to market to see if there is newer, smarter technology that could replace the 24 machines currently in place at New Zealand's international airports.

We're looking for a machine that can handle all types of baggage and can operate in a passenger arrival area (as opposed to behind the scenes). Technology has advanced in the last

15 years. There are a range of models that can provide enhanced detection for risk goods.

Next, we're heading into the Request for Proposals (RFP) stage, where suppliers will show us exactly what they can offer.

This upgrade is part of a wider government programme of work at New Zealand airports. We're still in the early stages of the process – building our project team and figuring out exactly what we need these new machines to do.

Things, however, are progressing quickly. The plan is to select a supplier by the end of this year and begin installation of the new machines in 2026.



This Rapiscan 626XR x-ray machine in action at Wellington Airport will be replaced under the upgrade programme.

Border TV still drawing fans

Production is underway for series 15 of **Border Patrol** and **Dog Squad** – two of the most popular locally produced reality TV shows.

The longevity of these shows is a fantastic achievement – one we think is worth celebrating in **The Border Space**.

Biosecurity New Zealand has been involved with the shows from the start, helping promote good biosecurity among international travellers here and overseas, and highlighting the work of our officers to protect New Zealand from invasive pests and diseases.

Over the years, some of our officers and detector dogs have become reality TV stars. Detector dog Watchman (who retired in 2017) and his handler Liz are one example. International visitors would sometimes recognise them by name at Auckland Airport.

Border Patrol

Focusing on the work of biosecurity, customs, and immigration officers at New Zealand's borders, **Border Patrol** was a big hit from its first episode in 2002. It continues to retain a large audience share on TVNZ. Its viewership has held up over the years despite declining numbers of television viewers in general.

Border Patrol was one of the first reality TV observational documentaries to be produced in New Zealand. According to its producers, the appeal was putting real New Zealanders in real situations on screen and providing an inside look at a world the public rarely sees.

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STILL POPULAR

Border Patrol 2023	1.77m TVNZ 1 viewers 37% of NZ's 5 years+ population
Dog Squad 2024	1.62m TVNZ 1 viewers 33% of NZ's 5 years+ population

Early promo shot for **Dog Squad**. Centre is canine reality star Watchman with handler Liz.

Fans appreciate the hard work of border teams to keep New Zealand safe. They also find the programme educational and informative, and they enjoy seeing a New Zealand-made show.

The show currently airs in more than 40 countries. Extending its reach even further, it now plays on the *National Geographic Channel* in the US as part of the documentary series *To Catch a Smuggler*.

Fans can look forward to a recap of some of the biggest Border Patrol busts and bizarre finds from series 6 to 12. TVNZ recently commissioned three one-hour episodes covering the best of Border Patrol. The shows are expected to screen in 2025.

Dog Squad

Dog Squad was first filmed in 2009. It follows the daily work of trained dog teams around the country, including our own biosecurity detector dogs. It sells to 38 countries around the world.

Nielsen survey results show Dog Squad fans are very loyal and committed to the show. Some 90% say the dogs are the reason they watch the show. They love seeing the dogs going through their training and working with their handlers, and enjoy the insight into what happens behind the scenes.

Puppy School

Puppy School was a spin-off from Dog Squad, following our biosecurity puppies during their early stages of training. It showcased their journey to becoming working detector dogs, highlighting their personalities and progress through our puppy walking programme and formal training.

The show lasted for four seasons, finishing in 2023 due to funding reasons. It had a big following, including on social media.

Learning the biosecurity ropes

Our first cohort of trainee officers for 2025 has started learning the biosecurity ropes.

The cohort comprises 19 new officers in Auckland and three in Wellington.

This year, we will recruit three cohorts of new officers. A second cohort of up to 25 officers will begin training in Auckland in July. Numbers are yet to be finalised for the third cohort, which will start in September.

Moving up the ranks

It was great to see another 18 officers recently gain their senior stripes.

The cohort, the second one for 2025, wrapped up its training in Auckland earlier this month after completing our Tairangatia te Whakapakari programme.



Our new Auckland trainee officers with other biosecurity personnel.

The progression to senior quarantine officer is part of our border career pathway programme. It provides officers with opportunities to progress and apply for leadership development, secondments, and overseas or seasonal deployments.

This year, we have an unusually large number of officers lining up to become senior officers, following the recruitment of almost 100 new officers in 2023. There will be five senior training courses in 2025.



The Wellington trainees.



The 18 new senior quarantine officers in Auckland.

From the frontline

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

Knot on Peggy's watch!

A necklace made from braided fresh plants recently caught detector dog Peggy's attention at Auckland Airport.

The American traveller, arriving from Sydney, was wearing the necklace during screening at the airport's express lane. She was unaware of the need to declare it and, consequently, was issued a \$400 fine.

Peggy was rewarded for her sniffing prowess. The plant material was destroyed.



Frogs destroyed

A mail consignment of dried frogs ended its journey to New Zealand in a quarantine bin at the Auckland Processing Centre.

Arriving from India in late March, the frogs were found infested with *Trogoderma* beetles, a genus that includes significant pests such as the Khapra beetle, which destroys stored grains and seeds.

The frogs were referred to Department of Conservation officials to determine if the consignment met requirements under rules for trading endangered species. Due to desiccation, the species was unable to be identified.



Mailbox fail

Three of these brightly painted mailboxes, purchased in China, failed recent biosecurity checks at Queenstown Airport.

Officers found live insects during inspection at the search bench after the mailboxes were declared by an arriving passenger.

The boxes were destroyed after the passenger decided not to pay for treatment.



“Bananas” in boots

A Christchurch officer completing his airport baggage x-ray training recently spotted what appeared to be two bananas concealed inside climbing shoes.

Arriving from Sydney in April, the passenger faced a \$400 fine after admitting they “wanted to put bananas inside my shoes.”

But before an infringement notice could be issued, the passenger blurted out: “They’re not real fruit; they’re a shoe freshener.”

Closer inspection revealed the bananas were made with cotton and, yes, were intended to deodorise stinky footwear.



From the frontline....continued

Popcorn removal applauded

Officers screening international mail at the Auckland Processing Centre recently reported a surge in popcorn kits containing non-compliant Zea mays seed.

The seed can only be imported as food for consumption if it is either in a sealed microwaveable bag or already popped.

The non-compliant popcorn kits were seized. Intended recipients were alerted, as was the source of the kits – a company based in Australia.

Acknowledging its oversight, the company took decisive action by removing the option for New Zealanders to purchase raw popcorn kernels from its website.

We applaud its response.

The move was part of Biosecurity New Zealand's continuing efforts to engage with offshore companies and e-commerce platforms to raise awareness of New Zealand's import rules and reduce the availability of non-compliant goods that can be ordered online.



Live scorpion

A live scorpion prompted an urgent call to our Tauranga office in March.

The scorpion was detected by staff on the floor of a transitional facility used for unloading imported hospitality equipment.



The facility deals with containers from a range of locations, including China, Italy, the US, Taiwan, and France.

The origin of the scorpion was unclear. Our local officers carefully checked the facility, finding no evidence of further scorpions.

Helping our sister agency

Two recent border finds illustrate our close working relationship with NZ Customs at the border.

The first involved the detection of gold jewellery carried by a couple of air passengers arriving in Christchurch from Singapore in March.

When questioned by our officers during a baggage search, the passengers presented a receipt pricing the jewellery at less than \$100. Realising that the price was ridiculously low, our officers referred the passengers to Customs, who determined the jewellery was valued at \$16,361.33 and subject to hefty border charges.

The second case involved the x-ray detection of 1.9 kilograms of methamphetamine concealed within a checked-in suitcase at Auckland Airport.

Our x-ray operator screened the suitcase upon request from Customs, noticing something unusual about the bag's plastic lining.

Further examination revealed a white crystal substance inside the lining.

The find resulted in the arrest of a 57-year-old passenger arriving from Sydney, who was charged with the importation and possession for supply of a Class A controlled drug.

Right: Drugs found in suitcase lining.



Border activity for March and April 2025

	Mar 2024	Mar 2025	Apr 2024	Apr 2025
Passenger				
Total arrivals	532,099	520,127	475,206	518,428
NZ/Australia	286,889	283,535	300,601	334,571
Rest of world	245,210	236,592	174,605	183,857
Risk items seized	8,620	8,461	7,485	8,128
Risk items treated or destroyed	5,693	5,529	4,933	5,119
Infringement notices	795	751	625	743
Mail				
Mail items screened	983,593	996,916	1,044,846	936,681
Mail items requiring further inspection	1,604	2,486	1,633	1,696
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	238	204	217	65*
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	68,961	62,459	61,999	63,351
Sea containers inspected	3,115	3,833	3,259	4,048
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	18,644	17,331	18,954	17,890
Cargo lines inspected	4,545	4,146	5,079	4,509
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	839	916	963	791

*This figure is provisional. Importers are given 28 days to decide whether to treat, reship or destroy mail.



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