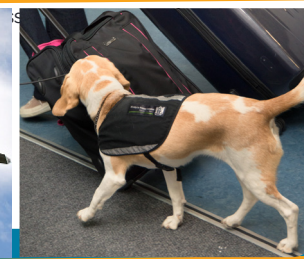




The BorderSpace

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



V-litter take a rest after an exciting day meeting their new foster families. From left front: Vino, Volt, Vizmo, Vesper. Back row: Vera, Vader, Vortex.

Two new litters welcomed

We recently welcomed our first beagle puppy litter of the year under our biosecurity detector dog breeding programme.

Detector dog Pippa gave birth to seven puppies in September, known as V-litter. Another one of our detector beagles, Rubix, also had seven puppies on 17 November – our W-litter. As first-time mums, both Pippa and Rubix are doing well.

The litters are the largest we've had in several years. V-litter comprises four girls and three boys. There are two girls and five boys in W-litter, which is our 46th beagle litter since the breeding programme began in 1997.

Pippa herself came from a large litter of nine, born to her late mum, former detector dog Huia, who was half harrier – a breed known for producing bigger litters.

The dad of V-litter is a beagle from outside our programme, chosen for traits we value in detection work and to introduce fresh genetics to our dog team population. Wellington-based detector dog Starsky is the dad of W-litter.

The puppies spend their first eight weeks at our kennel facility, where they undergo early training and are introduced to new sights and sounds to build confidence from a young age.

In early November, the V-litter puppies met their foster families from our puppy walking programme for the first time and have since moved into their care. Over the next 12 months, these families will provide basic training and help socialise the puppies.

At around one year old, the puppies will return to us for assessment and, if suitable, begin their next stage of training as biosecurity detector dogs.

The BorderSpace contents In this issue

- Biosecurity boots on the ground 3**
- Stamps celebrate biosecurity..... 4**
- New safety guidance for TFs..... 4**
- Summer prep..... 5**
 - Biosecurity hosts
 - New officers and dog teams
 - Smoothing the flow
 - Risk assessment relocation
 - Express risk assessment (ERA)
 - More arrival space at Auckland Airport
 - Layout changes at Wellington Airport
 - In-flight biosecurity video playing soon
- Spotlight on Hamilton..... 7**
- Biosecurity Act refresh..... 8-10**
 - New border fines for high-risk goods
 - Managing the e-commerce boom
 - Powers extended to port stops
 - PoFA enforcement
 - Facility management improved
 - IHS development streamlined
 - Biometric data collection confirmed
 - Better management of unauthorised goods
- From the Frontline**
- Interesting interceptions and other border activity..... 11-13**



Latest canine recruits

We also recruit puppies and young dogs to join our team and recently gave the tick to two wannabe detector dogs – Ollie and Nalu

Ollie is a one-year-old springer spaniel whose family was looking for a home where he could put his high energy to good use. His enthusiasm is proving a great match for biosecurity work. We’re hopeful he’ll make an excellent detector dog.

Nalu is an 18-month-old German short-haired pointer-labrador cross who joined us all the way from Great Barrier Island. Originally destined to be a conservation dog,

Nalu wasn’t suited for that role. So far, during early training, she’s showing strong potential for biosecurity detection work.

The pair are learning to detect the odour of apples and oranges and to indicate by sitting when they find these fruits. From there, we will build up their ability to search for these items and add more odours.



Biosecurity boots on the ground

The detection of yellow-legged hornets on Auckland's North Shore sparked a large-scale incursion response in early November.

Frontline officers have been active on the ground in Auckland, raising public awareness about the hornet and assisting with surveillance. Their activities include attending local markets on weekends, distributing information leaflets to households near detection sites, visiting local businesses, libraries, leisure centres and other community locations.

They are part of a wider response team that includes incursion investigators, laboratory staff, technical advisers, logistical support,

and contractors in the field setting and monitoring traps. The response is currently running seven days a week, involving long hours of work for many of our people.

We want to thank everyone involved for their hard work and dedication, including industry partners, local authorities, other agencies and the North Shore community.

Yellow-legged hornets can harm honeybee and wild bee populations.

If you think you have found a hornet or its nest, take a clear photo and report:

- > report.mpi.govt.nz
- > Call our exotic pest and disease hotline on **0800 80 99 66**

The latest information on the hornet response is available on the **Biosecurity New Zealand website.**



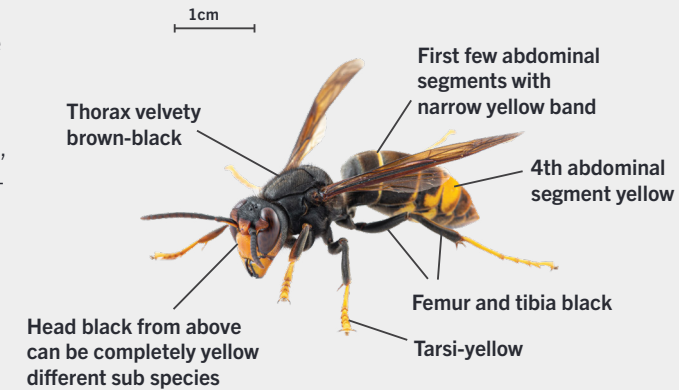
A quarantine officer visiting a North Shore market to encourage people to look out for yellow-legged hornet.



Setting traps to attract hornets in Glenfield, Auckland.

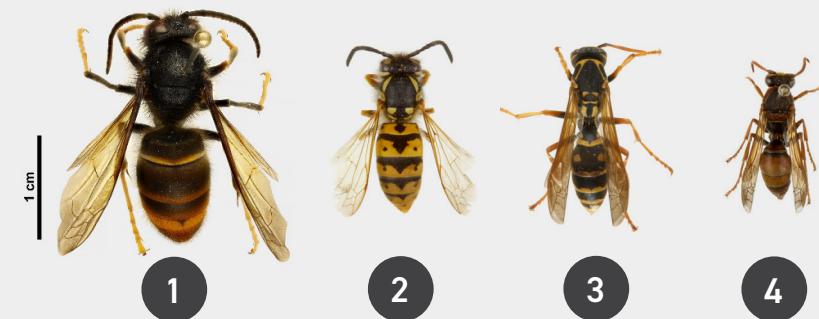
The yellow-legged hornet has distinctive dark legs with bright yellow tips. In contrast, common wasp species in New Zealand, such as the German wasp, typically have uniformly yellow or yellow-striped legs.

The yellow-legged hornet is also much larger than honey bees and common wasp species seen in New Zealand.



Hornets are larger than common wasps

1. Yellow-legged hornet
2. German wasp
3. Asian paper wasp
4. Australian paper wasp



Stamps celebrate biosecurity

We're delighted to see the work of our officers and wider biosecurity efforts celebrated through a new stamp issue.

Released to the public by NZ Post on 5 November, the collection highlights the importance of biosecurity in protecting New Zealand. The stamps feature a detector dog and other symbols of biosecurity in action.

This collection acknowledges the dedication of those working to keep New Zealand safe from harmful pests and diseases. It's also

a reminder that biosecurity is a shared responsibility, involving support from industry, other agencies, Māori organisations and communities to protect our country.

Biosecurity New Zealand worked closely with NZ Post to develop the collection, which includes a collectable card and five usable postage stamps.



The stamps are available through the [NZ Post Collectables website](#) or NZ Post stores.



New safety guidance for TFs

Biosecurity New Zealand has released new health, safety and wellbeing guidance for transitional facilities (TFs).

The guidance is designed for use by facility operators and follows public consultation earlier this year. It complements existing biosecurity operating rules for TFs, which now reference key safety points from the guidance.

Designed as a shared resource to help talk through health and safety concerns, the document gives TFs and our officers the same safety information, so everyone's on the same page.

The guidance is advisory only – there are no new compliance or auditing requirements. Our discussion-based process for resolving safety issues stays the same, but is now backed by this resource. TFs must continue to meet their existing responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act, regulated by WorkSafe New Zealand.

The guidance can be found on the [Biosecurity New Zealand website](#)

Summer prep

We're preparing for what is expected to be the busiest summer season since the COVID-19 pandemic, with multiple measures in place to manage increased passenger volumes and protect New Zealand's borders.



A biosecurity host helping direct passengers at Auckland Airport.

Biosecurity hosts

Biosecurity passenger facilitators (Biosecurity hosts) will once again be at the border, helping travellers through clearance processes and creating a welcoming arrival experience. This is the third season we've used hosts as part of our border operations.

We're hiring 26 part-time hosts to assist travellers at the country's four main international airports and new international services in Dunedin and Hamilton.

Biosecurity host hotspots	
Location	Number
Auckland	12
Hamilton	2
Wellington	2
Christchurch	7
Queenstown	2
Dunedin	1

New officers and dog teams

We have made significant investment in frontline capability this year, with 50 new officers joining our frontline teams.

This includes 40 officers based in Auckland. The most recent graduation in September saw 24 officers complete their training. Three Wellington-based trainees are due to graduate in December.

This summer, we will have 41 detector dog teams on patrol, similar to last year.



New officers perform a waiata at their graduation ceremony in September

Smoothing the flow

Several process improvements will help streamline passenger flow and improve passenger biosecurity. These include:

Risk assessment relocation

Over the last year, we have bedded in a new way of undertaking biosecurity risk assessments of air passengers arriving in Wellington, Christchurch, and Queenstown. Our assessment podiums, where officers question passengers, are now located before baggage collection at these airports. This approach has enhanced our traditional checks after baggage pickup, and provides a better arrival experience for international travellers.

Express risk assessment (ERA)

ERA is now an integral part of our border operations at Auckland Airport. The lanes are positioned before baggage collection, providing faster processing for passengers with nothing to declare or only low-risk goods. We recently introduced what we call low-risk control points into these lanes. Passengers processed at the assessment podiums face reduced questioning, speeding up the clearance process. Passengers identified as higher risk continue to be assessed at podiums located after baggage collection, where they undergo full questioning.

More arrival space at Auckland Airport

We are working with the airport to remove hoarding in place as part of its construction programme in the arrivals area. This will free up space to relocate x-ray equipment closer to our express lanes, providing more queuing space for passengers and better line of sight between different parts of our operation.

In-flight biosecurity video playing soon

International air passengers arriving in New Zealand should soon start seeing our new in-flight video.

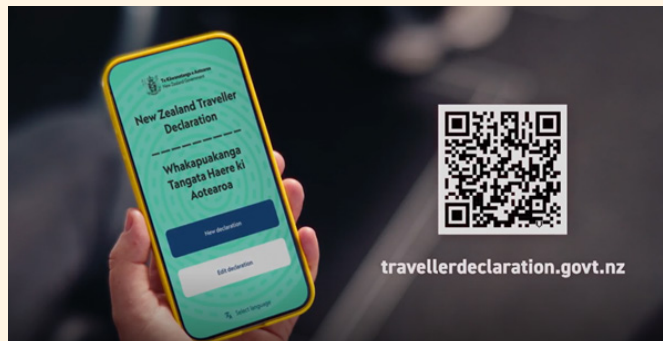
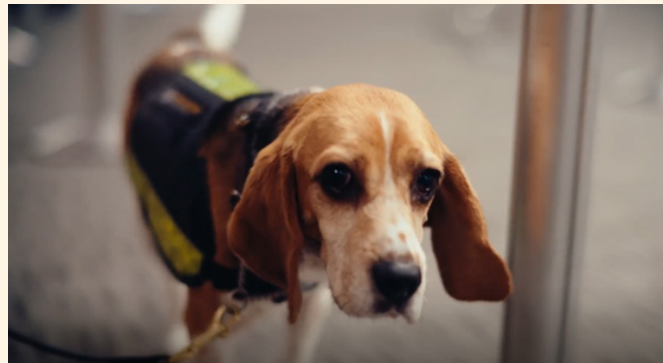
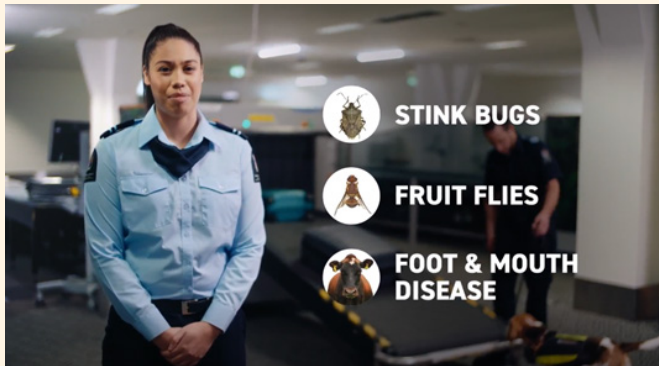
(see Issue 64 of The Border Space).

The updated video reminds travellers to declare or dispose of risk items and explains how to complete the New Zealand Traveller Declaration.

The video, along with a recorded announcement and script, has been sent to all airlines operating international flights landing in New Zealand. We expect airlines to add the video to their in-flight entertainment systems in time for the summer season.

The video helps airlines meet their legal obligations under the Biosecurity (Information for Incoming Passengers) Regulations 2023. The regulations require all commercial aircraft carrying 20 or more passengers (excluding crew) to provide biosecurity information before arriving in New Zealand.

The current video has been playing on international flights since 2019. It is viewed by more than six million passengers each year.



Summer snapshot

We're predicting a very busy summer for New Zealand's airports. From 27 October 2025 – to 30 March 2026:

- > International seat capacity to New Zealand is up 5.1% to around 4.15 million seats, driven by additional flights, larger aircraft, and new seasonal routes
- > Peak international airport arrivals will likely be:
 - > Auckland: 11 Dec 2025 to 26 Jan 2026
 - > Christchurch: 12 Dec 2025 to 23 Jan 2026
 - > Wellington: 18 Dec 2025 to 26 Jan 2026
 - > Queenstown: 14 Dec 2025 to 24 Jan 2026
- > There will be direct flights from 23 countries.
- > The top five departure ports will be Australia (10,670 flights), United States (1,423 flights), China (1,043 flights), Singapore (748 flights), and Fiji (610 flights).
- > Most international flights are scheduled to arrive at Auckland (73%), followed by Christchurch (13%), Queenstown (7%), Wellington (6%), Hamilton (0.67%) and Dunedin (0.3%).
- > Auckland Airport's busiest days are forecast to be 21 December, 4 January and 11 January, with nearly 23,000 arrivals.

A total of 17,312 flights are scheduled to land in New Zealand this summer.

Spotlight on Hamilton

The coming summer season will be the first for our Hamilton Airport team.

We've been working closely with the airport company and other border agencies to support a quick and efficient passenger processing,

Since the airport reopened to international services from Sydney and the Gold Coast, we have we have seen high compliance among travellers.

Between 16 June and 26 October, we processed 19,500 passengers through our biosecurity checks. During that time, 29 infringement notices were issued to passengers who failed to declare high-risk goods.

Cooked meat, bananas, and apples were the most common undeclared items seized. Hiking footwear, cooked meat, and honey topped the list of seized declared goods.

From December, we will have two biosecurity passenger facilitators (biosecurity hosts) based at Hamilton to assist passengers as they go through biosecurity checks.

Passenger numbers remain high, with only a slight increase expected over summer due to limited airline seats.



Biosecurity Act refresh

The Biosecurity Act is getting a refresh – the first in nearly 30 years.

It's a big moment for the law that underpins New Zealand's biosecurity system, protecting our economy, environment and way of life from invasive pests and diseases.

The changes are wide-ranging. They are a response to growing pressures from things like rising import volumes and climate change. They cover six key areas: enforcement and compliance, compensation, offshore and border activities, readiness and response, long-term management and surveillance.

After extensive consultation, the government plans to introduce the new legislation to Parliament next year.

Here's a summary of what's changing at the border and with import requirements.

1

New border fines for high-risk goods

A two-tiered infringement approach will be introduced for passengers who fail to declare risk goods at the border.

Those who fail to declare high-risk goods will face a \$800 fine with a maximum penalty of \$2000 if prosecuted. The existing \$400 infringement fee will remain for undeclared lower risk items.

The change is needed because the current approach treats low-risk items like chocolate the same as high-risk items like fresh fruit – even though fresh fruit poses a greater biosecurity threat. This approach aligns with

Australia's tiered infringement approach – introduced in 2021 – which has different penalties based on biosecurity risk.

The proposal received strong support during recent public consultation. Submitters believed the additional infringement would enhance deterrence and compliance while, at the same time, be fair and adaptable.

Not this time

Some of the proposed border biosecurity changes didn't make the cut, at least for now.

Food limit deferred

A proposal to allow MPI to modify volume limits for food and biological risk items carried by air passengers was deferred for consideration next year.

There is currently a 40kg limit on food and personal consignments of animal products carried by air passengers.

Biofouling in the EEZ

Following concerns from the shipping and cruise industries, and advances in in-water cleaning technology, the government decided to hold off on increasing the area covered by biofouling controls.

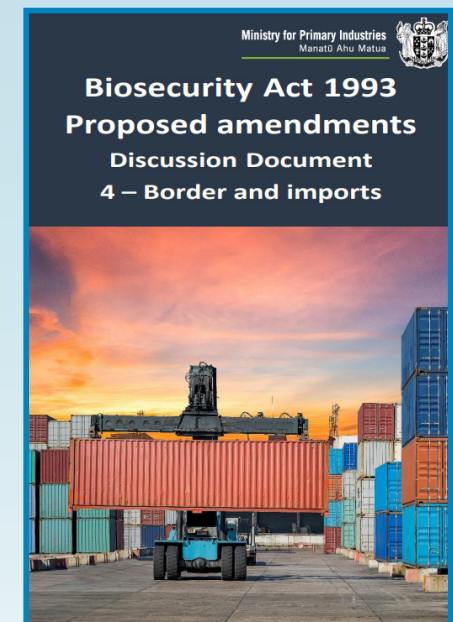
Biofouling (marine growth on vessel hulls) is a serious biosecurity risk to New Zealand's environment and economy.

The proposal was to give Biosecurity New Zealand powers to control the removal of biofouling in the Exclusive Economic Zone (12–200 nautical miles offshore).

It already has authority to manage biofouling removal within the 12-nautical-mile territorial limit.

Status quo for biosecurity info

Not going ahead is a proposal to increase requirements for commercial vessels or airlines to provide arriving passengers with biosecurity information. There wasn't enough reason to change the current approach at this time. We're continuing to work with airlines to ensure that they can meet requirements, and that we have appropriate tools to encourage compliance.



2

Managing the e-commerce boom

Biosecurity New Zealand will be able to specify and change information required for “unaccompanied goods” declarations.

This will make it easier to adapt to emerging threats.

In particular, the move addresses the rise of e-commerce, which has seen a huge jump in the importation of low-value goods, particularly as mail or cargo. Some 27 million low-value packages were imported in 2024 – an increase from 20 million in 2023.

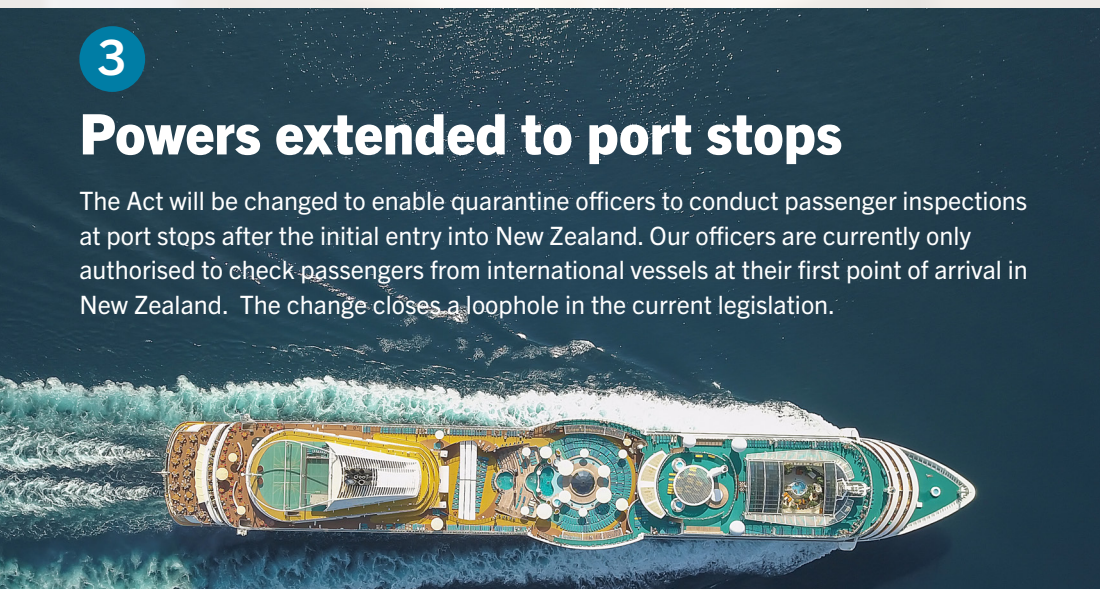
The fact is our officers cannot feasibly inspect every package. We very much rely on accurate information to assess risk.

To support enforcement, there will be a new infringement offence for incorrect, misleading, or incomplete declarations. The penalty will be \$400 for both individuals and companies. It will apply to those responsible for consolidating shipments for transport.

3

Powers extended to port stops

The Act will be changed to enable quarantine officers to conduct passenger inspections at port stops after the initial entry into New Zealand. Our officers are currently only authorised to check passengers from international vessels at their first point of arrival in New Zealand. The change closes a loophole in the current legislation.



4

PoFA enforcement

There will also be new enforcement tools for Places of First Arrival (PoFAs) that don’t meet their biosecurity obligations.

PoFAs are ports approved to receive goods, craft, and passengers entering New Zealand. As the first line of defence against biosecurity threats, they must meet stringent requirements.

Existing enforcement tools are either too lenient or too severe. To fill the gap, the initial proposal was to introduce strong pecuniary penalties (monetary fines imposed by a court as a civil enforcement tool rather than a criminal punishment). We also consulted on introducing penalties that increased the longer the PoFA was non-compliant.

However, following concerns raised by PoFA operators during consultation, the government decided on a different option. There will be a new fine and enforceable undertakings, where the regulator and PoFA operator work together to develop a remedial action plan.

The new strict liability offence will mirror those used to enforce compliance for transitional facilities. The current penalties for individuals are imprisonment of up to 12 months, a fine of up to \$50,000, or both. Companies face a fine of up to \$100,000.

5

Facility management improved

There are a range of changes to improve biosecurity management for transitional and containment facilities.

They include:

- > Introducing a streamlined approval process where the facility and operator are approved in a single step.
- > Automatically assigning the operator as the person responsible for the facility’s business and compliance.
- > Clarifying that delegated staff are only liable for breaches if they knowingly allow non-compliance or fail to take reasonable steps to prevent it.

There was strong support for the changes during public consultation in 2024, with general agreement they would improve clarity, fairness, and operational efficiency.

Transitional and containment facilities are essential for managing biosecurity risks at the border. Transitional facilities receive goods that may require inspection or treatment before clearance, while containment facilities hold goods that aren’t allowed general release (e.g. exotic animals).

6

IHS development streamlined

Changes to the way Import Health Standards (IHSs) are developed under the Biosecurity Act will better support trade and biosecurity.

IHSs outline the rules for managing biosecurity risks from imported goods. Goods cannot be imported unless they are covered by an IHS.

Delays in IHS development can restrict imports and result in lost economic opportunities for New Zealand businesses.

Changes to streamline IHS development include:

- > Reducing consultation requirements for some minor IHS amendments. However, there will be a requirement to notify changes that haven't been consulted on.
- > Allowing the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to issue permits for one-off imports where no IHS exists – for example, for small-scale testing for commercial viability, or for a cultural event.
- > Enabling consultation on risk management proposals rather than full IHS drafts.
- > Providing MPI greater flexibility to tailor risk assessments to specific threats. Right now, these assessments can take thousands of hours to complete.

Changes to the way Import Health Standards (IHSs) are developed under the Biosecurity Act will better support trade and biosecurity.

7

Biometric data collection confirmed

The Act will be amended to explicitly allow the collection, storage, and use of biometric information (e.g., facial recognition) for specific purposes – such as verifying the identity of arriving travellers.

While biometric information is currently considered collectable under existing legislation, it is not explicitly referenced in the Act.

The amendment will enhance transparency around the collection and use of biometric data.

Any collection or use of biometric information must be accompanied by appropriate privacy safeguards.

8

Better management of unauthorised goods

Quarantine officers will get clearer powers to seize or destroy planted flora and progeny (e.g. offspring or clones) from unauthorised goods.



From the frontline

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

Edible nests stopped

An x-ray detection at the APC in October revealed three boxes of edible bird's nests – nearly 2kg in total.

These nests are regarded as a luxury health food in some Asian countries, often prepared as soup. They are made from the saliva of swiftlets, small birds found in Southeast Asia and parts of southern China.

Unfortunately, they have the potential to carry avian diseases and are subject to strict import restrictions. The importer was sent a letter outlining their biosecurity responsibilities and given the choice of having the nests either reshipped to China or destroyed.



Applause for long server

Please join us in congratulating Jaimie Baird, Senior Quarantine Officer at Biosecurity New Zealand, who received the Te Tohu Ratonga Tūmatanui o Aotearoa | New Zealand Public Service Medal on 5 November.



Jaimie on the biosecurity frontline in the early 1970s.

Presented at Parliament during the Public Service Day Awards, this honour recognises those who embody the spirit of service. The day marks the anniversary of New Zealand's first Public Service Act in 1912.

Jaimie has dedicated more than 50 years to protecting New Zealand from biosecurity



Jaimie still keeping New Zealand's borders secure more than 50 years later

threats, starting as a Port Agriculture Officer in 1972. Among his many contributions, he had the original idea for a biosecurity stamp collection to raise public awareness [\(see page 4\)](#).

Jaimie retires soon and will be greatly missed by his team.

Thank you, Jaimie, for your exceptional service.

Live gecko

A container vessel from French Polynesia arrived in Auckland carrying an unexpected passenger – a live gecko.

Detected during an inspection in September, the gecko appeared to belong to the *Gehyra* genus and was notably larger than specimens our officers usually encounter.

The gecko was safely removed and humanely euthanised to remove any biosecurity risk.



Slimy thank you gesture

An international yacht sent our vessel evaluation team a heartfelt – albeit slimy – thank-you gesture with their pre-arrival documents.

To demonstrate hull cleanliness, the operator included the photo below, featuring a message shaped from slime on the vessel’s hull – a heart and the words, “We love NZ.”

The slime was removed after the photo was taken. The vessel operator said they hoped to “share a smile” and express gratitude for the hard work of biosecurity officials.

The yacht received pre-arrival biofouling clearance, making landfall in Opuia in late October.



Joplin’s “lucky” find

It wasn’t luck but highly developed sniffing skills that saw detector dog Joplin recently intercept a four-leaf clover at Christchurch Airport.

Joplin was patrolling the biosecurity express lane in October when she alerted her handler to something in the pocket of a passenger arriving from Sydney.

There was only a phone in the pocket – but inside the phone case was a freshly pressed four-leaf clover, found by the passenger’s children before the flight.

Because the plant material was still fresh, it had to be destroyed. The passenger received a stern reminder that all plant material must be declared when entering New Zealand.



First recorded snake species

Here’s an update on the snake detection by a transitional facility staff member mentioned in the **last issue of The Border Space**.

A Hastings-based accredited person (AP) contacted Biosecurity New Zealand after spotting a snakeskin during the devanning of a container from India. Arriving quickly at the

site, two certified snake handlers inspected the container, finding a live snake.

The snake was identified as a banded racer (*Platyceps plinii*) – the first recorded interception of this species in New Zealand, and only the second snake to arrive here from India.

Platyceps plinii is native to India and Pakistan, where it thrives in forests, rocky areas and open landscapes. It is non-venomous, killing its prey – small mammals, lizards, birds and worms – by constriction. Adults reach around 1.5 metres in length.

A huge shoutout to the AP, whose decisive action helped eliminate this biosecurity threat.



The banded racer secured inside a snake bag



Not sausages

The x-ray image of a parcel showed something organic – maybe sausages, or some other kind of meat? Or... severed human fingers?

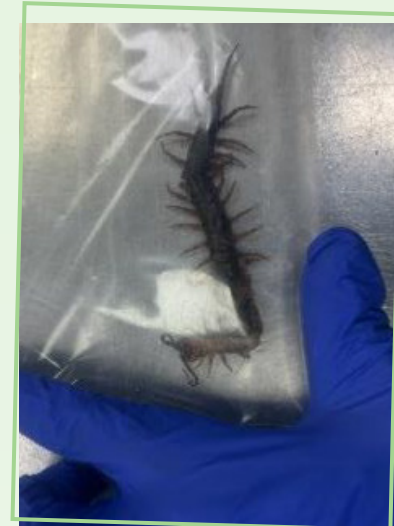
Thankfully, the contents turned out to be silicone props – part of a package of scary-looking Halloween-themed items arriving at the Auckland Processing Centre in October. No biosecurity risk, but rather gruesome.

Multi-legged boot stowaway

A passenger arriving in September from Rarotonga casually mentioned that a live centipede had crawled into a bag containing hiking boots undergoing inspection at Auckland Airport.

Before the multi-legged stowaway could make a run for it, the bag was swiftly secured in the lab. Sure enough, it was a centipede, which was promptly disposed of.

The passenger had declared the boots – doing the right thing to protect New Zealand from potentially invasive pests like exotic centipedes.



Avian arrival at Dunedin Airport

An avian arrival at Dunedin Airport decided to make a home for itself beneath one of our risk assessment podiums.

Discovered by one of our officers in September and initially thought to be a juvenile morepork (ruru), the feathered visitor was later identified as a German owl – a member of the local population, not an international arrival.

After a quick call to the Department of Conservation, the fledgling was collected by Dunedin Birdlife Rescue – who confirmed a nest had been tucked away in the ceiling.

According to the rescue centre, the owl is thriving – happily dining on worms and mice.



Liquified banana

Speaking of scary border finds, detector dog Oakley's nose didn't miss the decomposing banana in the backpack of a recent air passenger arriving from Australia.

Although, in this case, the smell from the liquified fruit was strong enough that even Oakley's handler could detect it.

The passenger thought the pungent odour was just a wet umbrella. The \$400 fine will hopefully encourage better biosecurity next time they arrive in New Zealand.



Border activity for September and October 2025

	September 2024	September 2025	October 2024	October 2025
Passenger				
Total arrivals	494,171	540,752	562,980	588,616
NZ/Australia	338,228	376,400	378,432	392,796
Rest of world	155,943	164,352	184,548	195,820
Risk items seized	7,549	8,360	8,854	9,041
Risk items treated or destroyed	4,932	7,739*	5,927	8,354*
Infringement notices	684	688	831	692
Mail				
Mail items screened	1,047,419	901,259	805,353	988,191
Mail items requiring further inspection	1,779	3,995	1,860	5,656
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	294	401	284	173**
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	52,300	57,810	61,002	61,690
Sea containers inspected	2,014	3,299	3,637	3,500
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	19,017	20,286	20,894	21,174
Cargo lines inspected	5,347	5,638	5,607	5,404
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	1,154	1,164	1,203	1,071

*This figure is provisional and will likely be adjusted upwards. Importers are given 28 days to decide whether to treat, reship or destroy mail.



Mike Inglis
Commissioner, North
Biosecurity New Zealand



Andrew Spelman
Commissioner, Biosecurity Intelligence
and Systems, Biosecurity New Zealand



Diane McDermott
Commissioner, Central/South
Biosecurity New Zealand

Sign up to

New Zealand's most
popular border
biosecurity publication.