



The BorderSpace



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

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That's a wrap

The brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) season finished on 30 April – the eighth summer with specific measures in place to stop this invasive pest.

During the 2025-26 season (September to April), Biosecurity New Zealand detected 62 live BMSB (provisional result). There were 40 live bugs recorded last season.

The largest live find involved eight bugs in the baggage of a passenger arriving from Italy. The second largest was five bugs found in an air cargo consignment of steel from Canada.

Our biosecurity measures are proving very effective, with no evidence of any established BMSB population in New Zealand.

As in previous seasons, the number of dead BMSB found at the border was much higher than live detections. This shows that offshore treatment requirements are continuing to reduce the biosecurity risk. Importer awareness of BMSB requirements also remains strong.

The season runs over New Zealand's warmer months. In the northern hemisphere winter, BMSB tends to shelter in enclosed spaces, which makes it more likely to hitch a ride to New Zealand in imported cargo. Vehicles, machinery and parts continue to be major pathways.

Biosecurity New Zealand regularly reviews its measures to make sure they are working as intended, while still allowing trade to flow. For example, there was recent consultation on proposed changes to import requirements for vehicles, machinery, and parts, including adding Uzbekistan to the list of countries that must treat goods for BMSB.

Monitoring also continues for countries where smaller BMSB populations have been identified. Goods from Argentina and Chile are now being checked, with further requirements ready to be introduced if the risk increases.

BMSB border measures

These include:

- > Additional checks of cargo from risk countries during the BMSB season. Transitional facilities and the accredited persons working in those facilities play an important role in detecting BMSB arriving in cargo.
- > All vessels arriving in New Zealand with breakbulk (uncontainerised) BMSB-risk cargo are subject to deck-by-deck surveillance during the BMSB season. We work with agents to encourage proactive reporting by vessel operators.
- > Officers and support staff meet flights and offer information about BMSB to passengers arriving on high-risk flights.

Anyone who thinks they have spotted a BMSB is asked to catch it, snap it (take a photo), and report it using Biosecurity New Zealand's exotic pests and diseases hotline on 0800 80 99 66.



Bug numbers

1 Sept – 30 April	25/26*	24/25
Total BMSB	576	1381
Live	62	40
Dead	514**	1341
Total detection events	135	218
Live detection events	46	37
Live BMSB by pathway		
Air Cargo	5 interceptions 9 bugs	7 interceptions 7 bugs
Cargo	18 interceptions 22 bugs	11 interceptions 14 bugs
Mail	1 bug	0
Passenger	19 interceptions 27 bugs	14 interceptions 14 live bugs
Unknown	3 interceptions 3 bugs	5 interceptions 5 live bugs
Vessel	0	0

Ready for duty

More than 20 new quarantine officers are nearly ready to step into frontline biosecurity roles around the country as they complete the final stages of their training.



The first Auckland cohort of trainee officers for 2026

The largest group is based in Auckland, where 14 trainees will graduate on 29 May. Three trainees in Christchurch will graduate on the same day. Three more in Queenstown and two in Dunedin – along with a returning officer who previously worked in another role at the airport – will graduate in early June.

It's particularly encouraging to see staff from other parts of the Ministry for Primary Industries stepping into frontline biosecurity roles – likewise, for trainees who have previously worked at airports as biosecurity hosts. The move reflects the strength of our internal career pathways and our ongoing commitment to developing talent from within MPI.

Alongside the new quarantine officers, Biosecurity New Zealand has also recruited four target evaluators (TEs). TEs work behind the scenes to help determine which

passengers and goods should receive closer biosecurity scrutiny, supporting frontline teams to focus on areas of highest risk.



Trainee officers visit the Auckland Processing Centre to see how international mail is cleared.

Training

Trainee officers complete a 10 week learning programme that combines online learning, classroom workshops and hands on training. The programme covers legislation, border processes, risk assessment, baggage inspection, pest and disease awareness, communication and compliance, cultural capability, and response simulations.

Further recruitment

Further recruitment is planned later this year, with a small Wellington cohort of around four quarantine officers expected in July, and a possible Auckland intake in October, depending on vacancy numbers.

Biosecurity New Zealand currently employs 476 quarantine officers across New Zealand.

New role

Meanwhile, our specialist auditing team is preparing to extend its verification duties beyond transitional facilities. Nearly 300 containment facilities will be included in its remit. These include zoos and post-entry quarantine locations. The Ministry for Primary Industries decided last year to move oversight of containment facilities from New Zealand Food Safety to Biosecurity New Zealand.

South Island recruits check out fire and rescue services at Christchurch Airport.



Ministry for Primary Industries staff visit Kamo Wildlife Park – a private zoo containment facility near Whangārei that will now be audited by Biosecurity New Zealand.

Trainee officers receive guidance in Christchurch on how to handle taonga and other items of cultural significance.



Summer love

It's starting to feel like a distant memory with winter bearing down upon us, but the figures are in for the 2025–26 summer season (December to February). They reveal another busy summer for officers patrolling New Zealand's international airports.

Passenger volumes exceeded last summer's levels, reaching higher than pre-pandemic levels for some airports.

Despite this increase, biosecurity processing ran smoothly, reflecting the strength of what we put in place ahead of the peak period.

Key to this was our investment in frontline capability, including additional officers, expanded detector dog teams, and the return of biosecurity hosts at major international airports.

Process improvements, such as the continued use of express risk assessment lanes in Auckland, changes to our assessment approach in other locations, and freeing up more airport space for processing, helped keep passengers moving. These measures ensured we delivered a positive arrival experience for travellers while continuing to protect New Zealand's borders.



Summer crunch

	2025–26	2024–25
Air passenger arrivals	2.05m	1.92m
Passengers with seized goods (declared)	15.6k	16k
Passengers with seized goods (undeclared)	3.4k	3.3k
Seizure rate per 1,000 passengers (declared)	8	8
Seizure rate per 1,000 passengers (undeclared)	1.7	1.7
Passengers fined	2767	2620
Passengers warned	296	421

Selected highlights

- > Auckland Airport had the highest number of arrivals, with 1.47 million passengers.
- > The busiest day nationwide was 21 December, with 27,849 air passenger arrivals.
- > Passenger arrivals reached 92% of 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels for the year to February 2026, according to Stats NZ.
- > Processing times for passengers passing through biosecurity controls at Auckland Airport continued to improve. The average processing time during the summer was 6.19 minutes, down from 6:43 in 2024–25.
- > 71.1% of passengers at Auckland Airport were assessed as having low biosecurity risk and directed to our express lane exit.
- > The summer season saw record numbers through Queenstown Airport, with more than 55,000 international passenger arrivals across December and January. This was 10% higher than the previous record, and almost double pre-COVID 2019 volumes.
- > This was the first summer season for the new international services to Hamilton and Dunedin following the return of international flights in late June. Teams at both locations were well prepared for the increase in passenger numbers.
- > Wellington Airport experienced a relatively uneventful summer, with stable passenger volumes. Looking ahead, volumes are expected to increase with the recent completion of an airport extension, enabling larger aircraft and future passenger growth.
- > Christchurch Airport saw arriving seat capacity increase by 19.2% compared with the 2024–25 summer season.

Auckland Airport lane changes

Trips through our biosecurity controls at Auckland Airport are getting quicker.

We've changed the lanes leading to our risk assessment area to a declaration-based system. Travellers now pick their lane based on whether they have goods to declare or not. These have taken the form of a simple red (declare) and green (nothing to declare) approach.

Previously, travellers entering the country were divided up according to passport, with New Zealanders and Australians going down one route and other nationalities another. Both groups previously had their own set of declaration lanes, something the new process simplifies considerably.

Additional tweaks to the stanchion layout will also allow the new red (declare) lanes to flow at a more equitable rate.

The changes, which were introduced following discussions between Biosecurity New Zealand and Auckland Airport, will save over one minute per traveller. While that may not sound like much, it adds up quickly. On average, more than 14,000 passengers pass through Auckland Airport's border controls every day.



Detector dog round up



Two of the canine newcomers – Tui and Ember.

New canines, handlers make debut

Three new regional dog handlers are set to start work for Biosecurity New Zealand, joining teams in Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown.

The trio will provide a welcome addition to our frontline teams and bring the total number of handlers at the three airports to 15 (four in Wellington, seven in Christchurch, and four in Queenstown).

Noah (German shorthaired pointer) will join his new handler in Christchurch. And two beagles, Milo and Quinlan, will be the canine half of the new detection dog teams in Wellington and Queenstown.

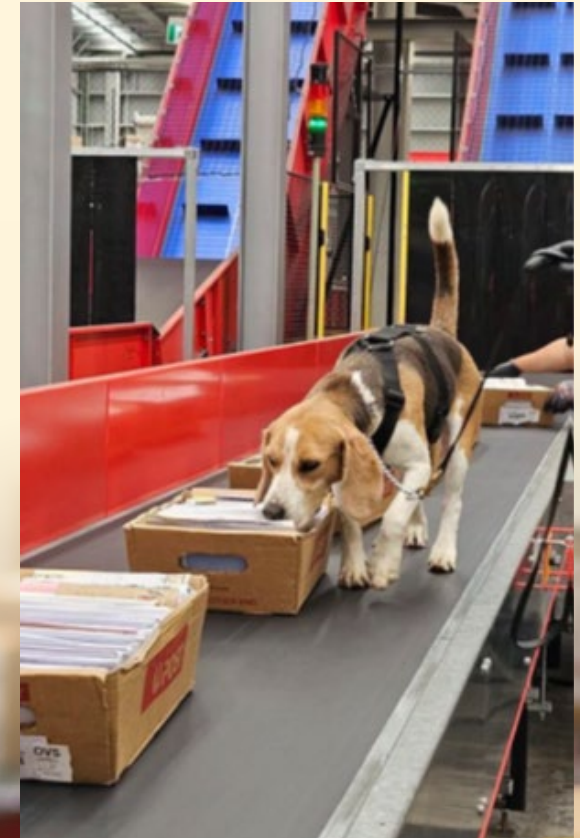
Several new dogs are also learning the ropes, including Ember, an energetic crossbreed and Tui, a black labrador.

Sniffer dogs lend a paw at the APC

Officers working on Auckland Processing Centre's letter trays are beginning to receive extra help of a four-legged variety.

Our detector dogs are spending more time sorting through letter trays, a task at which they've proved to be very effective.

While letter trays can be screened by x-ray machines, the dogs' mobility and ability to sniff out risk in small areas lends itself well to the task.



Pest or Pal?

Here's a quiz to test how well you know pests that could harm New Zealand. It's based on a card game developed by Biosecurity New Zealand's surveillance team to raise biosecurity awareness. The game has been a hit at public events promoting biosecurity. See if you can spot which of the following is unwanted or a friend to New Zealand.



1. I can grown to the size of a 10C piece.



2. I'm about the size of a thumb tack.



3. I can be as long as a golf tee.



4. I'm almost twice as big as a common wasp!



5. My body is as wide as a thumbnail.



6. This is my home. I'm the size of a sesame seed.



7. I can be as long as a pen.



8. I'm about the size of a raisin.



9. With wings open, I'm about the size of an eraser.



10. I'm the size of a chicken nugget.



11. I can be 1, 2 or even 3 paperclips long!



12. I'm the size of a big blueberry.

To report an exotic pest or disease call 0800 80 99 66 or online at report.mpi.govt.nz

1. Pest
Brown marmorated stink bug
Halyomorpha halys
Feeds on more than 300 host plants. Emits an unpleasant odour when crushed or disturbed.

2. Pest
Queensland fruit fly – *Bactrocera tryoni*
Danger to New Zealand's horticulture industry. Adult fruit flies can lay up to 100 eggs per day.

3. Pest
Spongy moth – *Lymantria dispar*
Can devastate trees and forests. It has stinging hairs that can irritate the skin.

4. Pest
Yellow-legged hornet – *Vespa velutina*
Danger to honey bees and has a nasty sting.

5. Pest
Spotted lanternfly – *Lycorma delicatula*
Feeds on sap, damaging at least 70 plant species, including pipfruit, stonefruit and kiwifruit.

6. Pest
Red imported fire ant
Solenopsis invicta
Will repeatedly sting anything that appears to be a threat.

7. Pest
Giant African snail – *Lissachatina fulica*
Known to attack over 500 different plant species.

8. Pal
European honey bee – *Apis mellifera*
One hive of honey bees can produce up to 150kg of honey per year.

9. Pal
Cinnabar moth – *Tyria jacobaeae*
Introduced as a biocontrol to New Zealand in 1929.

10. Pal
Tree Wētā – *Hemideina spp*
Has ears on their front legs.

11. Pal
Giraffe weevil
Lasiorhynchus barbicornis
Larvae help with decomposition of dying and fallen trees.

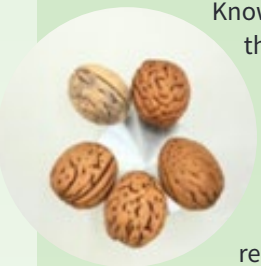
12. Pal
Three-lined hoverfly
Helophilus seelandicus
Adults are important pollinators.

From the frontline

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

“Lucky” walnuts

A passenger arriving from China had her lucky walnuts seized at Queenstown Airport in April.



Known as wenwan walnuts, they're symbols of health, wisdom, and status, and are often used as meditation balls. They are not for eating but are rotated in the hands to reduce stress and improve circulation.

As unroasted walnuts in their shells don't meet “basic” requirements in the Plants Biosecurity Index, they were destroyed.

In the end, the walnuts proved lucky after all. The passenger received a warning letter instead of an infringement.

Container cash

A cargo inspection recently led to a multi-agency investigation into drugs and money laundering.

The investigation began in November 2025, after a quarantine officer detected a large amount of undeclared cash concealed within the personal effects of a returning New Zealander. The discovery was made at an Auckland transitional facility.

Our team quickly alerted Customs, which seized AUD \$550,095 in cash and launched an investigation. It was determined the money likely came from criminal offending in Australia and was intended to be reinvested into property and assets in New Zealand.

A Police-led follow-up operation culminated in May with a search of a house in Gisborne, resulting in the seizure of the property, five motor vehicles, funds held in bank accounts, and \$42,000 in cash found at the address.

In a [press release](#), Police praised the multi-agency effort to thwart the criminal activity.

All the way from the UK

A wayfinding card for arriving airport passengers has found a new home — framed on the wall at Wellington's Customhouse.



The orange card, which directs passengers to baggage x-ray screening at Wellington Airport, recently turned up in the post with a handwritten note from the United Kingdom.

It read: “Apologies, I came home with this by mistake! Please return it to the biosecurity team at arrivals.”

Our Wellington team thought it was worth celebrating both the card's long trip back to Wellington and the passenger's thoughtfulness.

Not for kids

What was declared as a consignment of “toys” turned out to be something far less child friendly when officers opened the parcel.

Sent from Kazakhstan in March, the mail package was found to contain two birds (yellow billed choughs) intended for taxidermy. Both specimens were very fresh and unevenly covered in salt, indicating recent preparation.

The parcel was also accompanied by CITES permit (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) that had expired more than 20 years ago.

The importer was issued with an educational letter explaining New Zealand's import rules and given the options of reshipping the consignment or destruction.



International passengers arriving at Queenstown, Christchurch and Wellington are given a wayfinding card after risk assessment by an officer before they collect their baggage.

Depending on the colour of the card, they're directed to x-ray screening, baggage search, express lane or Customs.

Permit fraud

An eagle-eyed senior quarantine officer recently identified fraudulent permits while inspecting a postal consignment of Canadian ginseng, an endangered species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

The CITES permits appeared to be photocopies. Following referral to the Department of Conservation, Canadian authorities confirmed the permits were indeed fraudulent.



Cooked meat counts

Cooked meat still needs to be declared, as a passenger arriving at Christchurch Airport found out the expensive way last month.



Detector dog Fern was working in the airport's express lane when she indicated something amiss in a carry-on suitcase.

When questioned, the passenger confirmed there was chicken in the bag.

An inspection revealed 1.1 kg of cooked chicken and 950 g of beef patties – all undeclared.

The passenger said they believed cooked meat was allowed. It isn't, resulting in a \$400 fine. The meat was destroyed.

Reptilian treat

Strange but true, these are crocodile feet!

They were declared as pet treats in a parcel sent from Australia that was stopped at the Auckland Processing Centre in March. The items were referred to the Department of Conservation to assess compliance with the rules for trading endangered species.

Still popular

The latest series of Border Patrol is going great guns. Now in its 15th series, the reality TV show continues to attract strong public interest in the work of border teams from Biosecurity New Zealand, Customs and Immigration.

The show ranks in the top 10 of New Zealand television programmes, including those streamed online, reaching an average of close to 470,000 viewers each episode.

The series is due to finish on 9 June. If you've missed any episodes, they're available to stream on TVNZ+.

Meanwhile, production is underway for series 16 – so the legacy continues...



Ripper of a find

Detector dog Ripley and his handler were checking passengers after x ray screening at Wellington Airport when his nose hit olfactory overload.



An inspection of a carry-on bag sitting on a trolley uncovered nearly half of a KFC menu – a chicken salad, a bacon, egg and chicken wrap, and a bun with a hotdog.

The passengers, who arrived from Australia in early April, were issued a \$400 infringement notice. The fast food was destroyed.

Sails and spitfires

It's been an interesting few weeks for cargo inspections, with officers checking everything from cutting-edge maritime technology to a piece of aviation history.

In mid-April, the petroleum tanker Oriental Aquamarine arrived at Lyttelton carrying much needed fuel and a sail designed to reduce fuel use. During calm conditions, the sail folds neatly down, but under the right wind it can deliver efficiency gains of up to 20 percent.

The vessel entered New Zealand at Tauranga before visiting Timaru and Dunedin, and finishing in Christchurch.

There were no biosecurity issues.

Inspected by Queenstown officers, a Supermarine Spitfire arrived very clean from the United Kingdom in pieces to be assembled for the Warbirds Over Wanaka event at Easter.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the World War II fighter plane flew morale boosting sorties over the UK, with the names of donors marked on its tail in honour of National Health Service workers.



The Oriental Aquamarine with its fuel-saving sail.

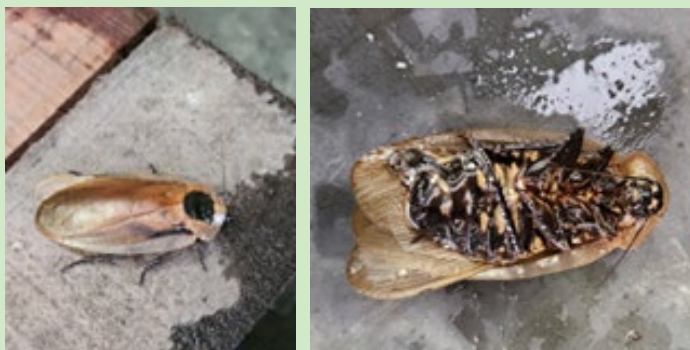


The spitfire passed biosecurity checks before featuring at the Warbirds Over Wanaka airshow.



Cockroach's freedom bid

A live cockroach was stopped in its tracks as it attempted to scuttle away from a stack of imported timber during a routine inspection in Northland.



Arriving from Guyana in April, the purpleheart hardwood was inspected at a Ruakaka-based transitional facility. Local quarantine officers checked the exterior of the stack and then pulled out individual boards for closer inspection – prompting the cockroach to make its bid for freedom.

The species was not formally identified, but it had a striking black marking on its head.

As cockroaches are common worldwide, they are generally considered more of a public health concern than a quarantine risk. Nevertheless, the timber was heat treated in an on-site kiln for more than 17 hours at 70°C – ensuring there were no more bugs wanting to make a run for it.

Snake and bug stowaways

Sterling work by a worker at an approved transitional facility (TF) recently led to the detection of a snake and suspected brown marmorated stink bugs – thankfully, all dead.

The worker was inspecting a shipping container at a TF near Taupō in March. After contacting local headquarters, the worker was immediately instructed to return all devanned items to the container, secure it, and wait for officers to arrive.

Officers travelled from Hamilton and supervised the unloading of the goods, with one acting as a spotter while another carried out checks as each pallet was removed.

As the goods were food related, the consignment had not been fumigated.



Dead on arrival – the stowaway snake

Further suspected BMSB specimens were detected during the inspection. All specimens, including the snake, were sent to a Biosecurity New Zealand laboratory for formal identification.

Container portal opens

Transitional Facility (TF) operators will very soon, if not already, have direct access to our Container Checks Portal (CCP).

This major development allows operators to see all containers that should be at their facility and whether there are any outstanding inspection results.

We have also started testing a business-to-business connection to the CCP. This will allow inspection results to be submitted electronically into our container management system, removing the need for double handling.

Volunteer TFs are working with Biosecurity New Zealand to test this feature. In the future, it will be available to all facilities.

Further details on the release date will be provided soon.

**For further information, contact Fiona Stewart
Fiona.Stewart@mpi.govt.nz**

Border activity for March and April 2026

	March 2025	March 2026	April 2025	April 2026
Passenger				
Total arrivals	520,127	570,555	518,428	542,226
NZ/Australia	283,535	308,511	334,571	340,697
Rest of world	236,592	262,044	183,857	201,529
Risk items seized	8,461	7,892	8,128	7,138
Risk items treated or destroyed*	5,529	7,460	5,119	6,619
Infringement notices	751	655	743	641
Mail				
Mail items screened	996,916	965,807	936,681	864,123
Mail items requiring further inspection	2,486	4,886	1,696	3,446
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	204	350	183	99**
Sea Containers				
Sea containers arrivals	62,459	70,284	63,351	61,699
Sea containers inspected	3,833	3,862	4,048	3,613
Cargo				
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	34,144	37,493	37,660	45,636
Cargo lines inspected	4,480	5,524	4,795	4,913
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed***	1,001	1,123	1,053	968

*From August 2025, this figure includes items collected from amnesty bins.

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

*** Cargo figures from November 2024 include new, pre-cleared and used vehicles



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