

April 2017

The BORDER SPACE

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



Keeping fruit fly at bay

I am touching wood as I write this, but it appears MPI's border controls have kept fruit fly at bay for another season.

There has not been any post border fruit fly detections since MPI detected and eradicated a population of Queensland fruit fly (QFF) in Auckland in 2015 with the help of industry partners.

It is pleasing to report that so far this year there have been no QFF interceptions at the border. However, the risk of a population establishing here remains high.

In 2016, there were four border interceptions of live QFF larvae.



And while we haven't see any QFF at the border this year, we have been intercepting other fruit fly species, including Oriental and Pacific.

So far, over the 2016/17 high-risk period there have been 16 confirmed interceptions, compared with 26 over the same period last year.

We are seeing a very low interception rate of undeclared fruit fly host materials from areas where fruit fly is established, despite rising passenger volumes. The average rate for passengers from Australia and Pacific Islands is 1.4 passengers per 1000 arrivals. The low rate suggests our biosecurity messages are getting through to travellers.

There has been a lot of host material seizures from vessels this season, but no fruit fly finds. The seizures have mainly come from cruise ships and yachts.

The cruise ship season is still underway, so I'll give you the seizure figures for this pathway at a later date. For smaller craft, my officers inspected 297 yachts at Opuia and Whangarei this season. They made 186 seizures of fruit fly host material (63 percent of arriving yachts). Nine vessels had undeclared risk goods.

In 2016 there were 212 fruit fly host material seizures from mail items.

Cruise ships embrace new biosecurity role

Just to add a little more about the latest cruise ship season, it's been great to see shipping lines prove themselves as responsible biosecurity citizens under our new accreditation scheme.

The scheme gives shipping lines greater responsibility for biosecurity in return for less hands-on scrutiny by quarantine officers on the wharf. Under the scheme, MPI moves from an inspection to verification role – in other words, to one of ensuring that appropriate biosecurity processes are in place aboard the ship.

I am planning to head to Sydney in May to discuss how the season has gone with the main industry players and to see where we go from here.



New trainees to start in June

After working through a list of nearly 300 applicants, we now have 25 new trainee quarantine officers due to start in June.

We have also started the process of hiring a further 25 officers, with job ads due to go out later this month. And we have plans to recruit more officers before the start of the 2017/18 summer season.

I have to say it's been a tougher recruitment than usual. Stricter security requirements have meant we have had to turn down many applicants that may have had a chance in previous years.

The new officers will allow us to keep frontline border staff numbers at around 510, making up for natural attrition during the year. Part of the attrition over recent months has been the loss of 15 officers to other parts of MPI as technical advisers, incursion investigators and compliance officers. Although it has been disappointing to see them go, it is great to get so many people with frontline experience in key decision-making roles.

We are also looking to place four officers into dog handler roles. Our experience shows recruits who have a couple of years or so under their belt in a "QO" role find it easier to make the grade.

Chinese air passenger boost

We're expecting to see a major increase in Chinese travellers arriving at our airports following last month's upgrade of the Free Trade Agreement between New Zealand and China.

Announced by the Prime Minister, the upgrade sees the cap on direct flights between China and New Zealand rise from 49 to 59. An additional 11 flights are due to start later in the year pending discussion between airlines and agencies.

There are also plans to free-up the movement of tourists and business people, including opening NZ Custom's SmartGate system to Chinese passport holders.

We've yet to start planning for the 2017/18 summer season, but I can say the boost in Chinese travellers is going to be a major consideration.

Stink bug season draws to close

It's been a successful brown marmorated stink bug season (BMSB) so far and I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of parties across the biosecurity system to keep this destructive pest out of New Zealand.

Our latest stats show border interceptions are dropping off as the season draws to a close.

To date (from 1 October to 22 March), there have been 106 stink bug interceptions. Thirty-two of these have contained live bugs.

Most of the recent interceptions have been from goods arriving from Italy, but this is not the only European country on our stinkbug radar. BMSB has become a nuisance pest in the Hungarian capital of Budapest and surrounding orchards. So we've been keeping close eye on car imports from this country.

I'd like to single out Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics for praise. WWL, as many of you will know, is the main shipping line for vehicles from Europe to New Zealand. It has taken the lead in arranging meetings with their European clients to find ways to stop BMSB hitchhikers. WWL has also been voluntarily inspecting and heat treating potentially contaminated consignments prior to loading. And all their vessels arriving from Europe have light traps on board.

For frontline border staff, the season has involved increased inspections of vessels and containers from Europe and the United States. We have also targeted exporters that have been found with contamination across multiple consignments or large aggregations of BMSB. There were alerts placed on two importers this season.

Of course, the border is not impenetrable, which is why it is only part of New Zealand's biosecurity system. There have been four stink bugs found in New Zealand associated with individual



MPI staff recently intercepted 29 brown marmorated stink bugs (pictured) from the roll-on/roll-off vessel Tiger during a visit to the Auckland port. Many of the bugs were found in the bonnet vent areas of vehicles destined for Australia.

travellers this year. The good news is there was no sign of any wider population in any of these cases. But it is a salutary reminder of the need for all of us to stay vigilant.

Stink bug season extended

The end of the stink bug season is nigh, but it will close a few weeks later than anticipated.

Due to recent stink bug finds in goods from Italy, our programme of increased border interventions will stay in place until later this month. We had been planning to close down at the end of March.

The extension will give enough time for the warmer weather in Europe to draw the bugs out of any nook or cranny they have been hibernating in for the winter, making it far less likely for them to arrive in New Zealand in imported goods.

Banned vessel allowed to return

The *DL Marigold's* biofouling saga came to an end last month when MPI allowed the vessel to return to Tauranga following cleaning outside New Zealand's territorial waters.

My staff initially ordered the bulk carrier to leave Tauranga within 24 hours on 6 March after it arrived from Indonesia with a palm kernel consignment. The order followed the discovery of dense fouling of barnacles and tube worms on the vessel's hull and other underwater surfaces.

The vessel had come to our attention before arriving in Tauranga. This was due to minor biofouling being detected on the vessel during earlier visits. The ship had since made three overseas

port visits longer than 30 days. Vessels that are stationary for this length of time are prone to biofouling. In addition, there was no record of the vessel undergoing biofouling treatment prior to arriving in New Zealand.

As the shipping agent was unable to provide certificates or photographic evidence prior to arrival to prove the ship was free of contamination, we demanded photos be taken once the vessel arrived in Tauranga. The subsequent images revealed severe biofouling.

Our decision to allow the vessel into Tauranga to take the photos was based on scientific advice that a very short stopover would minimise the chance of any unwanted marine species spawning or breaking away from the ship. In the end, the vessel was only in

Tauranga for a day.

Our decision to ban the vessel created international headlines, prompting other Pacific countries to follow suit by blocking the dirty ship from entering their ports to undergo cleaning. As a result, the owners ended up having to clean the vessel in international waters.

We allowed the vessel to return to Tauranga to finish discharging its cargo only after receiving fresh photos that proved the underwater surfaces were free of biofouling.

As you may have gleaned from this incident, MPI is taking a hard line on vessels with severe biofouling in the lead-up to the introduction of new biosecurity rules in May 2018 under the Craft Risk Management Standard.

The new rules will require all international vessels to arrive in New Zealand with a clean hull. The good news is most vessels will be able to meet their obligations by following established International Maritime Organisation biofouling guidelines.

I have already met with the owners of the *DL Marigold* to clarify their obligations. I also plan to attend workshop sessions with industry over the coming months.

New rules for managing marine biosecurity

More than 3000 international vessels visit New Zealand each year. Biofouling from these vessels could damage New Zealand's aquaculture industry and undermine the biodiversity of coastal marine life.

The new Craft Risk Management Standard (CRMS) for biofouling will help manage this risk by requiring all vessels to arrive in New Zealand with a "clean hull".

The CRMS is currently voluntary. It will become mandatory in May 2018. Until this time, MPI will continue to impose cleaning requirements on vessels that arrive with severe levels of biofouling,

Work is also underway to develop tools and processes to implement the standard, including ways to assess compliance and mitigation options to deal with non-compliant vessels, such as treatment facilities to remove biofouling. For example, MPI is working with NIWA and Cawthron to develop ways to manage biofouling in the pipework of vessels and methods to treat biofouling in sea chests of vessels. We are also developing procedures to assess the effectiveness of in-water treatment of biofouling, as many vessels are too big to haul out of the sea.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is the United Nations organisation responsible for regulating shipping. The CRMS will be aligned with the 2011 IMO Guidelines for Biofouling Management.



The CRMS requires all vessels to arrive in New Zealand with a "clean hull"

MPI is currently working to educate vessels about the CRMS. The audiences include international shipping, project vessels, the oil industry and recreational boat owners.



Mediterranean fanworm is an unwanted organism that is spread through biofouling on a ship's hull. It is present in New Zealand and forms dense colonies that have the potential to affect native species by competing for food and space.



The *DL Marigold*

Carousel x-rays offer potential

My detection technology team is looking again at how to use x-ray technology to make biosecurity clearances more efficient at airports.

You may recall a few years back we checked out using security images of baggage from departing Australian airports. Cost and technical issues meant we didn't go any further with this.

This time around we are looking at the feasibility of using biosecurity x-ray machines positioned on the baggage carousels in arriving airports. The images would be taken before passengers collect their baggage from the carousel. They would be used to make biosecurity risk assessments before travellers line up to face an officer.

We understand Abu Dhabi International Airport runs an x-ray screening system on its baggage carousel that could potentially be adapted for biosecurity purposes and used in New Zealand.

We have made contact with the airport and will be investigating further.

Hologram test

Speaking of whizzy technology, we are close to testing a holographic display to educate arriving air travellers about New Zealand's biosecurity rules.

The hologram will give a 3D display of risk items and provide commentary about why we don't want them in New Zealand. The visuals have yet to be confirmed, but one of the ideas floating around is to show insects crawling out from fruit carried inside



hand luggage. The insects would expand to fill the hologram and divide into a swarm. They would then be shown attacking an orchard.

The concept here is to create an eye-catching display that really grabs the attention of arriving passengers.

Staff from across MPI have been working with Auckland International Airport Ltd to identify locations to run a proof of concept trial. We are tentatively looking at kicking off a six-month trial at the end of July, although there are still a few internal MPI boxes to tick before we go ahead.

Mail belt trials underway

Trials of a fourth belt at the International Mail Centre in Auckland are underway for some mail types arriving from low-risk countries.



At the moment, mail items going through the other belts are screened by x-ray and/or detector dog. All items on the new belt only get screened by a dog – there is no x-ray screening.

Seizure results from the past five years show several countries pose a lower biosecurity risk, with the items seized able to be detected by dogs. We recently completed a trial with mail from Australia with good results, particularly as the dogs are there as

a safeguard to pick up any higher-risk goods such as fruit fly host materials, seeds and nursery stock.

This option speeds up mail processing and MPI staff can divert their full attention to items that come from higher risk countries, especially China. Over the last year there has been a 44 percent increase in general bulk mail from China.

The next step is to trial mail on the new belt from other identified low-risk countries. To that end, we will be working with New Zealand Post to isolate mail arriving from the United Kingdom and United States.

One team approach proposed for Auckland

We're planning to establish a single group for co-ordinating all MPI's border activity in Auckland.

There are currently five border teams operating in Auckland at different sites, including the International Mail Centre, the international terminal at Auckland Airport and the port.

These teams largely operate in an independent manner, which can result in co-ordination problems when we need to move staff around to meet seasonal work pressures or undertake response operations or large projects.

We're already had some success in using a centralised deployment approach for the majority of quarantine officers recruited since 2012 (some 95 staff). Our proposal is to set up a new Operations Group that would take responsibility for deploying all Auckland staff. This group may in time provide nationwide oversight of all MPI border activities.

Better co-ordination of our Auckland team should mean better biosecurity outcomes and better service for those of you who interact with my officials.

As with all organisation change, there's a process we have to work through to make the new Auckland ops group a reality, including consulting with unions. I'll report back on how things go.

From the frontline

The busy summer season is over, but our biosecurity work doesn't stop. Here's a selection of some interesting interceptions and other border activity since the last issue of **The Border Space**.

Log home pre-cleared

One of my Dunedin officers recently conducted an MPI first – the pre-clearance of a cedar log home from British Columbia, Canada.



The home is due to be delivered to a customer in Tarras, Central Otago.

MPI offered pre-clearance as an option to the customer to avoid the huge logistical hassle of inspecting the logs and containers at a transitional facility on arrival. Pre-clearing the home saw an inspection of the containers and individual logs at the site where the house was constructed and disassembled for shipping.

It also involved keeping an eye on the loading process.

To meet biosecurity requirements, the containers were washed inside and out before arriving at the worksite for loading. The containers were lined with plastic sheeting before loading and kept on trailer units for the entire process.

The logs had no bark, which meant less chance of insect hitchhikers. The work practices of the construction workers who prepared the home also aligned well with biosecurity goals. Each day on the job they swept all exposed log surfaces using brooms or garden blowers. This blowing/cleaning process was repeated on each log as it was fitted with slings, attached to the crane and swung to the container for loading. In addition, the workers ensured their boots were clean before walking on the logs or structure.

Upon arrival at Dunedin, the containers will all have a six sided inspection to ensure there has been no contamination en route to New Zealand. They will then be moved to a MPI-approved transitional facility for fumigation with methyl bromide.

There was good communication between MPI and the homeowner about New Zealand's import requirements during the planning stage of this operation. This resulted in full compliance. Apparently the construction company is keen to attract further buyers in New Zealand, so this type of biosecurity clearance may become more common in the future.

Travellers from Ethiopia fined



MPI officers seized the wax candles and pine sap, which had been intended for use in church. The spices and wooden items were inspected and released.

Monster truck

A quarantine officer appears dwarfed by the huge mining truck on board the vessel *Hoegh Trapper*, which arrived in Auckland earlier this year. The truck was the largest machine this vessel has ever carried. It



was found with considerable soil contamination. A great deal of cleaning was required before it was permitted entry. The tray had to be separated from the body of the vehicle for the cleaning to be carried out.

Snake arrives on private jet

You may have heard about our latest snake encounter from the extensive coverage in the media. The incident saw an Auckland

officer snare a live snake that hitchhiked to New Zealand on a private jet last month.

The snake was initially contained with a bucket by airport staff, then apprehended by a trained MPI snake handler. Later identified as a juvenile carpet python, the snake had crawled into the wheel housing of the private jet, which had arrived from Brisbane.



The aircraft had been parked in a remote bay in Brisbane for six weeks before coming to New Zealand.

MPI staff searched the plane and tarmac area, but found no sign of any other snakes. The python was later humanely euthanised.

Moth alert

Reports of a moth infestation causing skin problems among the crew of a bulk sugar vessel heading to Auckland rang alarm bells for MPI staff in February.

The infestation turned out to be Argentinian black moth (*Hylesia nigricans*), which has been causing problems in South America for more than a century. The moth has hairy larvae that can irritate human skin. It also has a voracious appetite, attacking many different kinds of plants.

Following specialist advice, the crew were issued with protective gear and carried out an extensive search of the vessel for eggs, larvae and adult moths. Numerous eggs and dead moths were located. The ship was also hosed down.

MPI ensured the vessel was anchored well off shore when it arrived in New Zealand waters. Two quarantine officers inspected the vessel in a similar manner to how we check for Asian gypsy moth. The officers found four dead moths, but nothing else. The ship was inspected again two weeks later when it was finally permitted to berth at the Auckland port.



Spreading the word

I am always keen to build closer relations with industry and get the biosecurity word out there, so it is with great pleasure that I have accepted invitations to speak at upcoming national conferences for Horticulture New Zealand, Potatoes New Zealand, and New Zealand Winegrowers. I hope this will be an opportunity to greet many readers of **The Border Space** who I have yet to meet in the flesh.

Container concern

I feel compelled to say something about the increasing number of contaminated shipping containers arriving from some Pacific countries.

To give an idea of the extent of the problem, four quarantine officers at the Auckland port inspected 150 containers arriving from the Pacific Islands during a single day in February. During that day, they intercepted three lizards, two Pacific Island hornets, a black widow spider, various grass fragments with seeds, two mud wasp nests and a large huntsman spider.

The high level of contamination has resulted in increased targeting for certain nations, which has meant additional inspections. If the trend continues MPI will have to introduce significant cleaning requirements, which may delay the release of certain consignments.

I'm hoping it doesn't come to that, but for any importers and shippers who read **The Border Space**, don't say you haven't been warned.

Port of Tauranga showing the way

On a more positive note to finish, I would like to draw your attention to the fantastic efforts underway at the Port of Tauranga to create a model of biosecurity operational excellence.

Spearheaded by Kiwifruit Vine Health and the port company, the partnership programme with MPI has helped build biosecurity awareness among frontline port workers, leading to improved compliance. I understand that the port's stevedores have become very vigilant at keeping an eye out for unwanted hitchhikers.

Awareness activity has included the introduction of biosecurity induction materials, regular MPI presentations at port forums and a campaign to increase levels of stink bug reporting.

An upcoming workshop will bring together everyone involved in port activities, including transitional facility operators, to consider their biosecurity role.

I applaud this work and it is pleasing to see we are getting interest from other ports in adopting similar partnership programmes.

Border activity for February and March

	Feb 16	Mar 16	Feb 17	Mar 17
Aircraft and Aircraft Passengers				
Passengers	532,455	511,125	579,332	533,204
Infringement Notices	997	965	1,119	1,020
Aircraft	2,801	2,763	3,003	3,176
Sea Containers				
Loaded Containers	36,890	36,269	38,934	44,686
-Inspected	948	965	864	789
-% Contaminated	20.78%	15.44%	18.98%	15.59%
Empty Containers	21,748	26,017	21,646	22,926
-Inspected	2,255	2,535	2,566	2,623
-% Contaminated	5.6%	4.6%	10.2%	10.6%
Personal Effects				
Clearances	2,409	2,353	2,402	2,486
Inspections	799	708	753	797
% requiring decontamination	4%	2%	9%	5%
Direct Vessel Arrivals	261	258	248	243
Mail				
Mail Items Arriving	2,271,065	2,321,585	2,444,867	2156546
Mail Items Opened	2,690	2,765	2,730	3,360
% requiring biosecurity action	22%	24%	26%	31%



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