

The BORDER SPACE

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



Passenger compliance up

Our latest annual compliance survey (for the year ending 30 June) shows that 98.7 percent of international air passengers are free of biosecurity risk items by the time they leave the airport.

This is a very positive result, given our target is 98.5 percent. It is the first time we have surpassed that target since the introduction of a much stricter auditing regime nearly three years ago.

The good results don't stop there. The survey shows:

- 99.5 percent of passengers meet our requirements regarding medium and high-risk goods by the time they leave the airport. (So it very much appears that we are keeping the bad stuff out!)
- 99.9 percent of passengers comply with biosecurity requirements associated with goods that could host fruit-fly.

The successful results are largely due to the continuous improvement programme in place since 2012 (when the compliance result was 95.3 percent).

Under the programme, MPI has adopted improved x-ray technology and increased the number of detector dogs and quarantine officers.



I anticipate further compliance improvements next year as a result of new initiatives underway in the passenger pathway (see previous issue of **The Border Space**).

The 2014/15 compliance survey, conducted in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, involved checking some 10 500 passengers to see if they were carrying goods that pose biosecurity risk after passing through airport checks.

This was 3500 more passengers surveyed than in 2014.

Colmar Burton audited the survey, saying it was "of high quality, and [that the] compliance estimates based on this year's methodology are robust".



Border traffic on the move

I have often cited increasing border traffic as a driver behind MPI's recent investments in biosecurity. The latest statistics illustrate how quickly things are moving.

Our figures for July 2015 (compared with July 2014) show:



Passengers up 7 percent. There has been particularly strong growth on trans-Tasman and Pacific routes, stimulated by a busy school holiday period.



Passenger infringements up 17 percent. Infringements have grown more than overall arrivals due to increased number of passengers from countries with lower-compliance rates.



Cargo consignments requiring MPI inspection up 10 percent. Due mainly to growth in overall imports



Personal effects up 26 percent. Due to strong growth in permanent and long-term arrivals.

New sniffer teams

The first batch of 24 new biosecurity detector dog teams started sniffing out risk items at New Zealand's airports on 7 September.

We plan to have all the teams in place by December, assuming everyone passes their training.

So far, 11 teams have been cleared to start work, although the new handlers will need some further training to become fully warranted as quarantine officers.

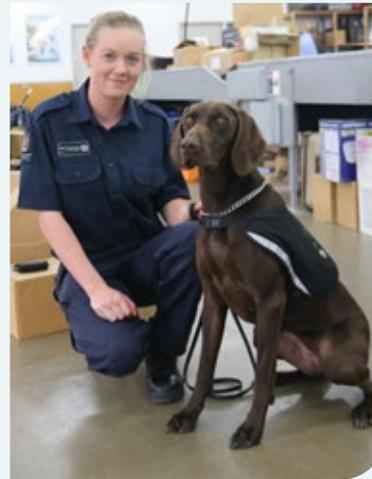
Two of the teams are based in Christchurch, one has started in Wellington and the remainder are working in Auckland (airport and mail centre).



Super sniffers – Meggyn Bamford and Meg, a lab/beagle cross



Loulou and new handler Rachel Thurbon – MPI's first ever harrier detector team



Sophia Fowlie with Daisy – a pointer cross

There are some interesting new dogs among the new teams, including Daisy, a chocolate-brown pointer cross, sourced from a dairy farm in Tokoroa. It is the first time MPI has used a pointer as a detector dog for some years.

Then there is Meg, a labrador/beagle cross that combines the detection skills of two of the best sniffing dogs in the business.

And I must mention Loulou – the first harrier hound MPI has used in active biosecurity service. Loulou is on heat at the moment so won't be joining her handler for two or three weeks.

biosecurity risk items before they enter New Zealand, and we will have the capacity to increase the level of screening during times of high alert.

We recently put the new machines through their paces with trials to see whether our airport staff could handle 100-percent screening of arriving passengers, should this level of intervention ever be required in future.

MPI has now installed 19 new x-ray machines around the country over the past three years.

X-ray boost

Four new biosecurity x-ray machines were installed earlier this month in international airports in Auckland (two units), Christchurch and Queenstown.

The machines will be used to scan baggage from overseas travellers for plant and animal products that pose biosecurity risk to New Zealand.

The new gear means border staff will be better equipped to spot

Cruise ship risks identified



A recent survey has given us greater understanding of the risks posed by individual cruise lines and an overall view of cruise passenger behaviour.

The survey, undertaken by MPI border and intelligence staff, involved 30 cruise ships across 16 different lines between October 2014 and May 2015 (53 percent of approved visits during this time). Here is a summary of the findings:

- Fruit fly host materials (510) amounted to 75 percent of the items seized from passengers.
- Passengers arriving from Tonga, French Polynesia, Vanuatu and Australia, had the highest average number of seizures per vessel.
- Cruise ships where the last port of departure was the Pacific Islands had 27 percent higher seizures than those with Australia as the last port of departure.
- Auckland (262), Dunedin (143) and Wellington (90) are the New Zealand ports with the highest seizure rates. They also have a higher average number of seizures per vessel. These ports have a higher proportion of direct arrivals, passenger exchanges and larger vessels.
- Interestingly, seizures dip after the first port of arrival but pick up again after the third stop (for vessels with multiple port stops in their itineraries).

The findings will influence how we allocate resource as we go into the 2015/16 cruise ship season. We also plan to use this information to work with the cruise industry to increase biosecurity awareness among passengers.

New coastal vessel surveillance programme

In what is another example of MPI and shipping lines working together for improved biosecurity outcomes, a new monitoring programme will target coastal vessels that carry international cargo.

Under a new arrangement with Pacifica Shipping, MPI will inspect two coastal vessels every six months for contamination associated with international cargo.

The checks will be in addition to the existing biosecurity clearance process that international cargo carried by coastal vessels undergoes at destination ports. The inspections will help eliminate the chance of any cross-contamination during transit.

MPI has also provided education materials to encourage crew members to be on the lookout for things like insects, snails, spiders and snakes, and to explain what to do if they find anything.

Crew have also been asked to report any containers contaminated with grain, soil or plant materials.



Border activity for May/June 2015

	July 15	August 15
Aircraft and Aircraft Passengers		
Passengers	486 385	445 888
Infringement Notices	445	397
Aircraft	3 097	2 899
Sea Containers		
Loaded Containers	39 233	39 430
-Inspected	911	713
-% Contaminated	16%	19%
Empty Containers	18 391	13 972
-Inspected	4 628	3 362
-% Contaminated	3.4%	4%
Personal Effects		
Clearances	2 312	2 082
Inspections	664	383
% requiring decontamination	6%	5%
Direct Vessel Arrivals	205	219
Mail		
Mail Items Arriving	2 500 972	2 427 521
Mail Items Opened	2 859	3 374
% requiring biosecurity action	21%	19%



Low-risk TF option

Many importers now have the option of contracting an outside provider to provide transitional facility services.

The use of a “multi-site transitional facility” may work well for importers that receive low volumes of sea containers, importers who are looking to set up a new TF, or someone who needs to receive a one-off container at short notice.

The option avoids having to run your own TF, which has costs associated with things like training Accredited Persons or Operators, undergoing MPI audits and annual fees.

So something to think about... Details of providers of this service are available on the **MPI website**.

From the courts

It's been a busy couple of months for biosecurity-related prosecutions, and it's pleasing to see the courts dishing out some hefty fines.

X-ray picks up delicacy

A North Shore man earned himself a \$15 000 fine from the Manukau District Court for trying to import a Chinese delicacy that threatens New Zealand's poultry industry and native birds.

Tian Chi Lee, 40, of North Shore, pleaded guilty to attempting to import 68 dried bird nests.

Bird nests are a Chinese delicacy made from the saliva secretions of the swiftlet bird. Swiftlets can carry a number of significant avian diseases not found in New Zealand.

An MPI x-ray operator detected the nests in a package from Malaysia at the International Mail Centre.

Flower importer fined

A Mangere-based flower importer (Premium Flowers NZ Limited) was fined \$10 000 in Manukau District Court in July after pleading guilty to bringing unwanted plant material into New Zealand.

Six of the charges related to importing cut Aster flowers from Malaysia in July and August 2013 with the accompanying documentation identifying them as another species called Solidago.

A further charge related to importing cut foliage from the plant Asplenium from Malaysia in April 2014 where the accompanying documentation identified it as Dracaena.

Lack of direction

A Christchurch business specialising in the biosecurity clearance of sea containers was stung with a \$16 750 fine in July for failing to follow a direction notice issued by MPI.

The company was required to have a sea container of imported goods opened and checked by an accredited person in a secure area.

Instead, the company inspected and opened the container at an adjacent premises and removed contaminated soil from the shipping container into a council bin – an irresponsible action that could have released risk materials into the environment.

MPI ensured the product was secured and that managed destruction took place.

And finally...

MPI quarantine officers regularly intercept unusual risk goods, but my hat goes off to my Australian border colleagues for recently snaring this package of live snakes in Melbourne.



News for TF staff

The latest issue of **See Contain Report** is available on the MPI website. The newsletter provides information targeted at Transitional Facility Staff.

Previous issue

The previous issue of **The Border Space** is available on the MPI website.

Steve Gilbert
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