



The BorderSpace

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



Border checks protecting Aotearoa

Our latest compliance survey results show we are continuing to protect New Zealand from biosecurity threats posed by arriving air passengers and international mail.

Air passenger compliance over the years

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2022/23	2023/24
Compliance rate	98.70%	99.0%	98.84%	98.77%

Passenger compliance monitoring was not carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the drop in traveller arrivals.

Consistent passenger results

The overall compliance rate for arriving passengers was 98.77%, surpassing the target of 98.5%. This figure was very close to the previous year's compliance rate of 98.84%. This is a very positive result, given the recent rebound in air travellers.

The survey involved additional checks of passengers and their baggage after they had passed through regular biosecurity controls at New Zealand's four largest international airports – Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Queenstown. It was conducted between July 2023 and June 2024.

It was pleasing to see Auckland Airport, the busiest arrival point for

international passengers, achieve a high compliance rate (99.0%). The result clearly illustrates the work we have done at this airport to speed up passenger processing has not compromised biosecurity.

This is also reflected in the strong performance of the express lane exit, which had a compliance rate of 98.9% across the four airports.

Passenger compliance for high-risk goods associated with foot and mouth disease and fruit fly host material was also very high at 99.7%.

During the survey period, 618,475 passengers and crew arrived at the four airports. Of these, 2% (12,465 passengers) were surveyed, providing a robust sample for assessing compliance.

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Mail compliance up

Compliance survey results also demonstrate our operating model for mail biosecurity is working well.

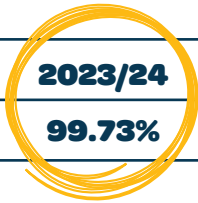
The overall mail compliance rate from the latest monitoring survey was 99.73%, producing the best result in three years and exceeding our target of 99%. Last year, the result was 99.49%.

All mail types performed greater than 99%, included registered mail, which was sampled independently for the first time.

The survey was spread out over the financial year and involved inspecting 4117 mail items at Auckland’s International Mail Centre. In the past, the survey fieldwork has been concentrated over three or four weeks.

Mail compliance since 2021/22

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Compliance rate	99.70%	99.49%	99.73%



More passengers

International travel has rebounded faster than expected following the COVID-19 pandemic, with our officers processing more passengers arriving by both air and sea.

More than 5.6 million air and sea passengers arrived in the first nine months of the 2023/24 financial year

(to the end of March). This is a 38% increase compared with the same period in 2022/23.

The forecast is for these increases to continue. We expect to see close to seven million passengers in 2024/25 – a massive jump from the low of 328,445 in 2020/21 when COVID-related travel restrictions were in place.



ARRIVING AIR PASSENGERS EXPRESS LANE COMPLIANCE

99.0%

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE AND/OR FRUIT FLY COMPLIANCE

99.7%

Managing the mosquito threat

We have been working closely with Health New Zealand to manage the threat from exotic mosquitoes following recent border detections at Auckland Airport and Port Nelson.

Enhanced border measures at Auckland Airport

Biosecurity New Zealand introduced enhanced border measures at Auckland Airport following the detection of live *Culex pipiens pallens/molestus* mosquitoes in certain flights arriving from Shanghai Pudong International Airport in late April. This mosquito is associated with diseases such as West Nile virus and Japanese encephalitis.

The enhanced measures have included targeted treatment of aircraft holds and air containers on arrival and rigorous inspection by officers. Additional treatment, cleaning, and surveillance have also been introduced in Shanghai by the affected airline.

The good news is there have not been any detections of live exotic mosquitoes in flights since 30 April, which suggests the measures are working. As a result, we are looking to scale back the additional treatment requirements.

The move would also see ground handlers resume air container inspections for the affected flights. This is business as usual. Handlers carrying out these inspections must receive biosecurity training and be approved as “accredited persons”.

Air container treatment at Shanghai Pudong International Airport will continue until at least 31 October. It is likely to stop after this date if there are no more detections of live mosquitoes, giving us confidence the risk is being managed offshore.

Health New Zealand and Auckland Airport will continue with mosquito surveillance at the airport.

Health New Zealand carries out routine mosquito surveillance at New Zealand’s air and seaports and has led the response at Auckland Airport so far.

Detections at Port Nelson

Biosecurity New Zealand has also been assisting with Health New Zealand’s response to detections of exotic mosquitoes at Port Nelson.

A live *Culex molestus* mosquito was collected during routine surveillance in May at the port. There have since been further detections at the port.

We have had staff on the ground to assist with increased surveillance. This has involved trapping, surveying, monitoring, and treating all potential breeding habitats.

Biosecurity New Zealand laboratory staff are also helping identify mosquitoes collected from traps.

The public health and biosecurity risks are currently considered to be very low, as there is no evidence the exotic mosquito has established outside the port.



Mossie profile

The recent exotic mosquito responses in Auckland and Nelson involve insects from the *Culex pipiens* group of mosquitoes – *Culex pipiens pallens* (the common house mosquito or northern house mosquito) and *Culex pipiens f. molestus* (the London Underground mosquito).

The *Culex pipiens* group of mosquitoes is linked with the transmission of diseases such as West Nile virus, Japanese encephalitis, and filarial worms.

They are widespread in many parts of the world, including parts of Australia, South America, and South Africa.

Culex pipiens mosquitoes are classified as an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993. They have been detected at the border before but have not established in New Zealand.

Exotic mosquitoes can arrive as eggs on damp surfaces, as larvae in water, or as free-flying adults. They can arrive in imported cargo on equipment or surfaces with cavities capable of holding water, such as tarpaulins, water lying inside flat-rack cargo, or inside containers.

Surveillance responsibilities for exotic mosquitoes are split between Health New Zealand and Biosecurity New Zealand. Health New Zealand focuses on ports and seaports. Biosecurity New Zealand runs a national mosquito surveillance programme that covers post-border locations, including wetlands.

Arriving international aircraft must be treated to ensure they do not carry invasive insects. Biosecurity New Zealand officers verify that treatment has been carried out correctly.

Tech edge

We are continually looking at ways to improve our management of biosecurity risk with new border technology and related processes. Here are some recent examples.

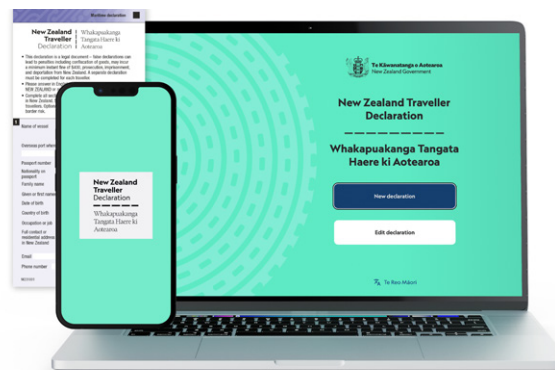
NZTD push continues

Work continues across all border agencies to encourage more arriving air passengers to complete their declarations using digital versions of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration (NZTD).

Greater uptake of the digital NZTD will allow more efficient processing of passengers across the border.

After successful trials in May, selected flights into New Zealand no longer offer paper declarations by default to passengers, although they are available on request. This initiative has seen a jump in people using the online NZTD. Wellington recently became the first airport to trial restricting access to the eGate passport control system for targeted flights. Those who had completed a digital declaration were able to use the electronic gates. Those still using the paper method were diverted to a Customs booth for manual processing, resulting in potentially longer clearance times.

We have been monitoring the trials to ensure there is no impact on biosecurity processing.



...continued overleaf



Travelling to New Zealand soon?

You'll need to do a **New Zealand Traveller Declaration.**

TravellerDeclaration.govt.nz

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

New Zealand Traveller Declaration | Whakapuakanga Tangata Haere ki Aotearoa

NZTD's first anniversary **The New Zealand Traveller Declaration is about to celebrate its first anniversary.**

Traditional first-year wedding anniversaries suggest using a paper theme to celebrate, but the NZTD is moving in the opposite direction. The goal is to significantly reduce the number of paper declarations.

The online system, which collects travel, customs, immigration, and biosecurity information, was launched in August 2023.

By the end of June, more than **45%** of travellers to New Zealand were completing their declarations

online before arriving in the country. Border agencies have been working in close collaboration with airlines to make travellers aware of the website form and NZTD app.

The online form is now available in Te Reo Māori, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Hindi, Samoan, Fijian, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Tamil, Tongan, and Portuguese. Users can read questions in their own language, but answers must still be written in English.

The NZTD app can be read in four languages: English, Te Reo Māori, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional).

The ability to download the mobile app in advance of travel, save profile details, and continue to fill in the declaration while in offline mode is a key benefit for frequent, long-haul, and cruise travellers.

For more information, visit **travellerdeclaration.govt.nz**.

X-ray replacement

We've gone to market to look at options to replace our ageing airport baggage x-ray machines.

The plan is to replace up to 20 machines, used at both international airports and military bases, to screen baggage for biosecurity threats.

If all goes to schedule, we are likely to request detailed submissions from potential suppliers shortly.

We need machines that can operate in busy biosecurity control areas and have suitable tunnel sizes to handle both check-in and hand baggage.

We're open-minded about imaging options, looking at both dual view 2D and 3D. Our current machines use single view 2D imaging, but we have been testing 3D technology at Auckland Airport for some time and see it as having huge potential.

We are also looking for machines that can be programmed to automatically detect risk items, building on the work we have already done to develop algorithmic detection for both baggage and mail.

X-ray screening plays a key role in frontline biosecurity clearance, alongside risk assessment, detector dogs, baggage inspections, and other interventions.

eGate upgrade offers biosecurity options

Biosecurity New Zealand is working with New Zealand Customs to upgrade the eGate passport control system at international airports.

The upgrade includes the possible procurement of electronic exit marshal gates, which could be integrated with the eGate system to direct travellers through airport biosecurity controls.

The procurement process started on 25 June with a call for registration of interest from suppliers, published on the Government Electronic Tenders Service.

Customs and Biosecurity New Zealand will evaluate the interested suppliers to decide which will be asked to provide detailed submissions.

The exit marshal gate procurement is part of a wider digital programme to improve border biosecurity. The programme will build on the recent introduction of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration system. For example, the intention is to make greater use of NZTD data to identify low-risk travellers before they arrive at the border, allowing more streamlined biosecurity processing.

Clarifying digital declarations

The introduction of clarifying questions for digital declarations will lead to speedier risk assessment of arriving travellers.

These are follow-up questions for travellers that declare items when using digital versions of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration.

For example, a traveller who declares food is now automatically presented with a drop-down list of different food types to select.

This reduces the amount of questioning required by officers during risk assessment, particularly if it is clear there is no biosecurity risk – for example, if the declaration is for processed food like sweets or chocolate.

The early identification of risk items allows our officers to concentrate on goods that pose the highest biosecurity threat.

We plan to develop more clarifying questions for use with the NZTD. This will improve both processing efficiency and biosecurity protection. It demonstrates the greater flexibility provided by digital declarations compared with paper-based arrival forms.



Directing air passengers through the NZTD system at Queenstown Airport.



Inspection robot upgrade

A new version of our inspection robot is helping clear imported vehicles at the Auckland port.

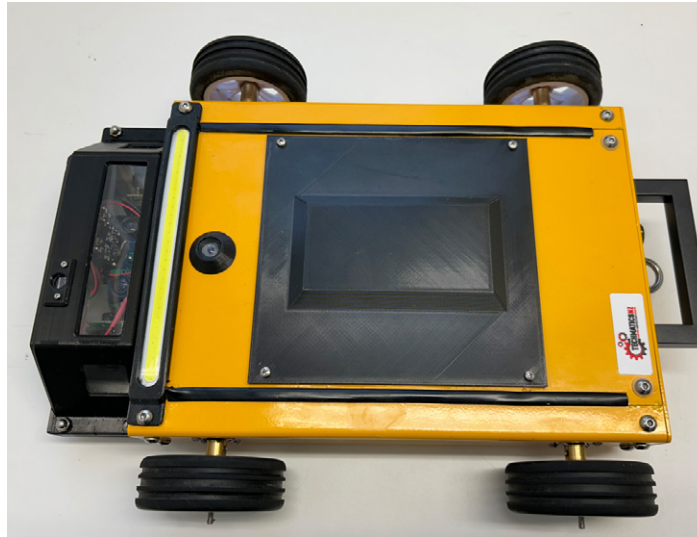
Formerly nicknamed “The Bug”, the robot is used to inspect the underside of new vehicles that would otherwise require ramping. Previous versions have been in use since 2019 and have proven to be a safe and efficient clearance tool.

The latest model (Hades-6) is easier to operate. It has multiple cameras allowing it to move and take images at the same time. Its predecessor only had one camera, which had to be lowered to identify the position of the robot under the car.

Hades-6 can also scan the entire underside of a vehicle automatically at the press of a button. The operator can zoom into any part of the processed image to get a close-up view of potential contaminants.

We currently use two robots for vehicle clearance and are exploring other uses. This includes checking the underside of sea containers, which currently must be placed on a stand to give our officers access.

At present, we are the only biosecurity agency in the world using this technology in the field.



The Hades-6 inspection robot up close (above) and in use below.



**BIOSECURITY
BUSINESS
PLEDGE**

It takes all of us to
protect what we've got

Biosecurity
Awareness
Month

AUGUST

Let's all come together to support customers, staff, suppliers and stakeholders to understand the importance of biosecurity and what good biosecurity looks like.

- We've created some collateral available at: www.thisisus.nz/biosecurity-business-pledge
- We're keen to hear about your biosecurity heroes – take a photo and tell us why someone in your office, team, workplace or community are biosecurity champions. Send it to us at thisisus@mpi.govt.nz throughout August and we will post your heroes on our LinkedIn page and website.
- What about making a video of what you do? Not polished, just keeping it real (or reel). Send us that too!

Connecting with e-commerce providers

Work continues with e-commerce platforms to build awareness about New Zealand's strict biosecurity requirements.

Ensuring we have strong relationships with e-commerce platforms helps us to support a stronger biosecurity system to manage increasing volumes of imported goods ordered through overseas websites.

The online purchasing platforms we are engaging with range from boutique websites in Australia, who are often very responsive to contact from Biosecurity New Zealand, Trade Me, to large global e-commerce platforms, including eBay, Amazon, Wish, Alibaba, and Etsy.

Our work with eBay resulted in the provider blocking the sale of plants, seeds, and bulbs to New Zealand-based customers in early 2023, closing an entry pathway for significant biosecurity threats. eBay has advised that its restrictions on these sales to New Zealand resulted in approximately 5000 intended sales being blocked during the first year. The clear messaging provided by eBay informs New Zealand-based purchasers about our import requirements.

We connect with e-commerce platforms as they open their digital platforms to New Zealand-based customers. A new entrant to the New Zealand market that Biosecurity New Zealand has established a dialogue with is Temu. In March 2023, Temu opened their online marketplace to New Zealand and Australian customers and has quickly become a widely used platform, supported by large-scale advertising campaigns. Our focus is to ensure platforms like Temu understand New Zealand's biosecurity rules, that we understand their processes and that we establish a way of working with them to address any concerns.

Our vigilance at the border continues. We have seen instances where biosecurity risk items have been accidentally ordered from overseas. Late last year, Christmas trees were imported from Australia with real cones attached, instead of the advertised plastic cones. Our officers intercepted the parcels and we were able to contact the company sending the product. The company agreed to stop further delivery to New Zealand.

We are also aware of occasional instances where people have received biosecurity risk goods with another purchase – for example, seeds are sometimes included as a gift.



The pinecones were meant to be plastic!



Buyer beware

New Zealand has strict biosecurity requirements to keep harmful pests and diseases out of the country. We ask online shoppers to:

- Purchase goods, especially seeds, plants, and animal products, from reputable companies rather than buying online from unknown suppliers.
- Be aware that unknown suppliers may not know about, or be able to meet, New Zealand's strict biosecurity requirements.
- Promptly report accidental or unintended receipt of risk goods to our exotic pest and disease hotline: **0800 80 99 66**
- Check what can be sent to New Zealand on our website: **www.mpi.govt.nz/bring-send-to-nz**

Offshore grape inspections in full swing

Quarantine officers travel to Australia and the United States each year to conduct offshore inspections of table grapes destined for the New Zealand market.

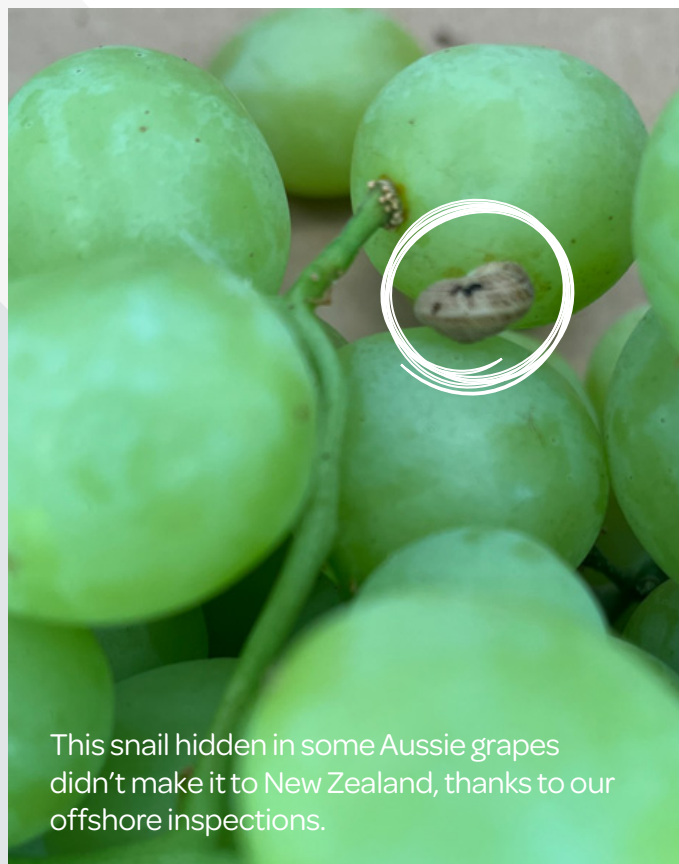
A team of senior officers conducted grape inspections in Australia between January and May this year. At the time of writing, the team is in the United States where the harvesting season is underway.

Contaminants in grapes include snails, spiders, insects, seeds, and mealy bugs.

The use of offshore inspections for grapes provides commercial and biosecurity benefits. Rejecting a grape consignment once it arrives in New Zealand often leads to fumigation, which significantly reduces shelf life. Rejecting it before shipment means the producer can divert the product to other markets more quickly and New Zealand's biosecurity requirements are safely managed offshore.

Working in a foreign environment for several weeks poses challenges for our officers on deployment and requires adaptability, resilience, and relationship management skills. The work involves communicating with packhouses and local regulatory agencies to ensure they understand New Zealand's biosecurity requirements.

Ka pai to our team who do an excellent job for both biosecurity and New Zealand.



This snail hidden in some Aussie grapes didn't make it to New Zealand, thanks to our offshore inspections.



Aussie grapes awaiting inspection in a Mildura packhouse.

Managing risk offshore

Biosecurity New Zealand has a range of offshore pre-border verification and clearance programmes that help us to prevent unwanted pests and diseases entering New Zealand.

For some years, at the request of industry bodies, quarantine officers have travelled offshore to undertake pre-border verification and clearance work for specialised, high biosecurity risk and time-critical large project imports that are important to New Zealand.

The pre-border verification programme includes inspections for cargo that may encounter delays in biosecurity processing. This ensures quicker processing for this cargo at the border.

The work involves importers and supply chains developing biosecurity management plans and working with our inspectors offshore to ensure the cargo is clean and free from pests before shipping.

Pre-border verification has been used for products such as imported table grapes and specialised heavy

plant equipment used in large roading or construction projects like Auckland's Waterview Tunnel and Wellington's Transmission Gully motorway.

New Zealand imports table grapes from a number of countries. Pre-border clearance ensures the grapes meet our strict biosecurity standards and that the supply to New Zealand is maintained. It also reduces the commercial risk to the grower, who could be unable to sell the grapes to other markets if they required fumigation on arrival in New Zealand.

From the frontline

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

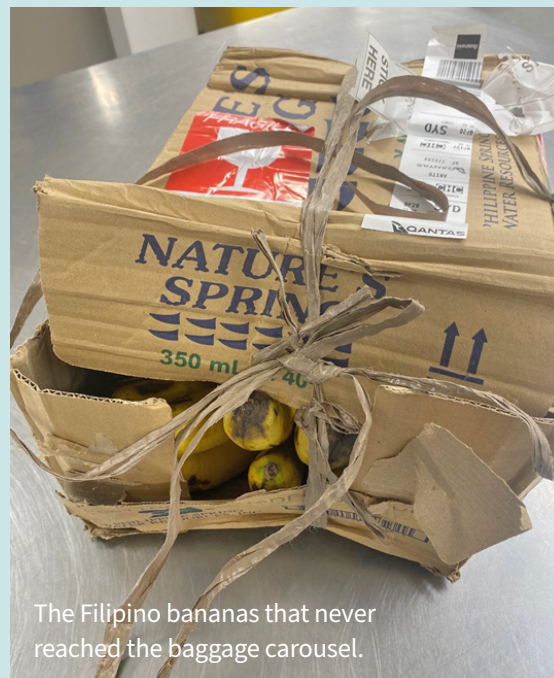
Banana alert from baggage handler

An early heads-up from a baggage handler at Christchurch Airport resulted in the speedy seizure of a 10kg box of bananas in early July.

The bananas were moved straight from the air container to the airport's transitional facility. One of our officers alerted the passenger, who was waiting at the baggage collection area to pick up the box.

Arriving from the Philippines, the passenger had declared the fruit, which had been grown on her own property. A baggage search did not unearth any more risk goods. The ripe bananas were found to be contaminated with mealy bugs and spiders, but, thankfully, not fruit fly.

The move to take the box directly to our containment area very much reduced the biosecurity risk, particularly from flying insects such as fruit fly. It demonstrated fantastic teamwork between the airport and local officers.



The Filipino bananas that never reached the baggage carousel.

Fine for paddock delivery

Hefty fines handed out to an Auckland freight company and its manager for parking uncleared sea containers in a paddock should send a clear message about the need to follow biosecurity rules.

Auslink International New Zealand Limited and logistics manager Christopher James Manning (68) were sentenced in the Manukau District Court on eight charges each under the Biosecurity Act in June. Auslink was fined \$16,250, and Manning was fined \$12,000.

Compliance investigators found that, between

December 2021 and April 2022, Auslink was required to carry out biosecurity checks for 15 sea containers at its approved transitional facility. None of the biosecurity checks were done in full.

In the end, 13 of the 15 sea containers were sent to a paddock at a farm. While no exotic pests were found in or on the 15 containers, we argued the defendants took an unacceptable risk.

Under the Biosecurity Act, all sea containers arriving in New Zealand must be sent from the port of first arrival to an approved transitional facility for inspection and unpacking.

Labrador recruits welcomed

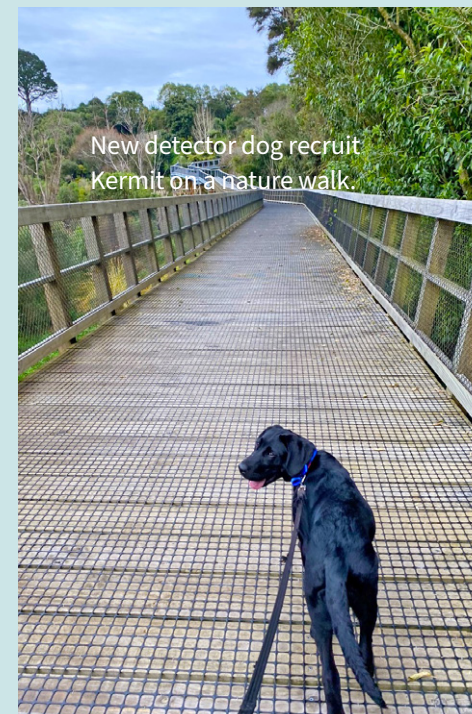
Four Labrador puppies (Jura, Mulan, Ash, and Kermit) were recently welcomed into our biosecurity detector dog programme.

Purchased from North Island breeders, the pups will spend the next 12 months preparing to become detector dogs with their foster families, based in Auckland and Hamilton.

During this time, they will learn basic commands, be socialised, and have the opportunity to get familiar with worksites.

To determine their suitability to become future detector dogs, they will be regularly monitored and undergo assessment after six and 12 months.

All the best to our puppy recruits, who may one day be helping to protect New Zealand from unwanted pests and diseases.



New detector dog recruit Kermit on a nature walk.

Fake fruit

They looked very much like fruit and vegetables but were actually made from edible casing with a broad bean paste filling.

The only thing that was real was fresh leaves. A passenger arriving from Thailand declared the fake food to officers at Auckland Airport in June, avoiding a fine.

The passenger was horrified to learn the items were phony, and was quite happy to have them disposed of.

Our officers were amazed by the level of skill and patience that went into making the treat.



From the frontline...continued

Pies return home

A chilly bin of bacon and salmon pies received the biosecurity greenlight to return home in June.

The owner was keen to bring the pies back to New Zealand after being told she couldn't bring them into Australia. Aussie biosecurity officials held the 24kg consignment until the traveller returned to New Zealand.

Our Christchurch Airport team checked with Biosecurity New Zealand's animal imports team before clearing the consignment. The pies were in unopened plastic packaging.



Hallucinogenic spawn stopped

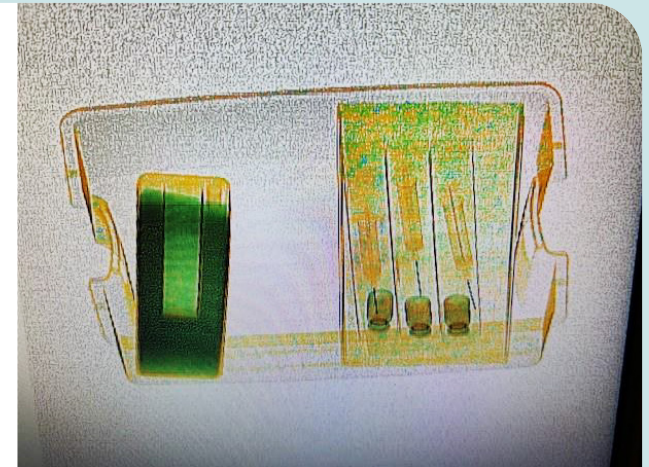
Glass vials containing hallucinogenic mushroom spawn attracted attention from both biosecurity and customs officers in early July.

Intercepted at Auckland's International Mail Centre after arriving from the Netherlands, the product's packaging stated the spawn (*Psilocybe cubensis* strain) was not for human consumption and for microscope use only.

Lacking further documentation, the product failed to meet biosecurity requirements and faced either reshipment out of New Zealand or destruction.

Referred to NZ Customs, there was concern the spawn could be injected onto a growing medium to produce hallucinogenic mushrooms for human consumption.

X-ray screening detected the glass vials containing mushroom spawn (pictured right).



Contaminated wheat buried

Our Wellington cargo team recently supervised the deep burial of a large volume of wet wheat.

Fifty tonnes of wheat imported for processing into flour became contaminated when the roof of a silo leaked at a Wellington transitional facility. The grain, which also contained insects (weevils), posed a biosecurity risk if it was able to germinate and grow here.

The wheat was emptied from the damaged silo and securely transported to an approved deep burial site. Due to the large volume involved and poor weather, the process took several weeks.

Local officers supervised the removal process, ensuring the wheat was transported securely and buried to required conditions, and that all machinery, clothing and equipment used were clear of wheat so that no contaminated grains left the site.



From the frontline...continued

Emergency clearance at Invercargill

An engine fire led to an emergency landing of an Australian passenger plane at Invercargill Airport in June, attracting nationwide publicity.

Operating outside the media glare, officers from our Queenstown team raced down south to clear the aircraft's crew and to contain any risky food and garbage.

The Virgin flight had left Queenstown before being diverted to Invercargill. Normally, these flights turn around very quickly in Queenstown. Crew and any biosecurity items stay on the plane, so don't need full biosecurity clearance.

As the plane was delayed for some time in Invercargill, the crew had to disembark, and perishable food and garbage needed to be removed or sealed. Our officers thoroughly inspected the aircraft for biosecurity threats and conducted a risk assessment of the crew.

Biosecurity New Zealand has contingency plans in place with Invercargill Airport for biosecurity clearance, including approved procedures for disposing of risk goods.



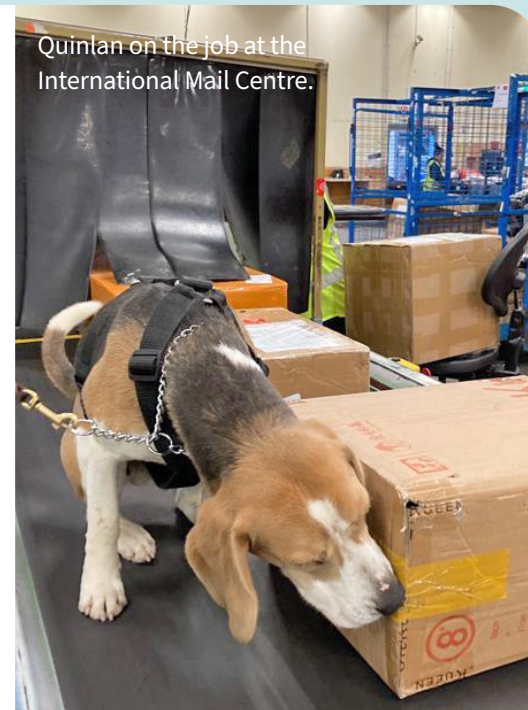
Big haul for new detector dog team

New detector dog pup Quinlan and his handler Heather landed some big interceptions after only a few days on the job at Auckland International Airport and the International Mail Centre.

Quinlan's haul included sniffing out burgers, beef jerky, banana skin, and a large box of meat products, while on the beat to prevent high-risk goods from entering New Zealand.

The pair joined the Biosecurity New Zealand team in July as a fully qualified detector dog team after completing several months of training.

Heather graduated as a detector dog handler in May. From there, they completed the final phase of training, an eight-week induction programme working on-site with the support of a trainer.



Fine for pigeon and pork dish

A meal containing a pigeon head and pork led to a \$400 fine for a traveller arriving at Christchurch Airport in June.

The item was intercepted with the help of detector dog Fern's sniffing prowess while working in the airport's express exit lane.

The passenger, arriving from Australia, had declared bread but not the meat dish.

Education for arriving passenger

A traveller returning to New Zealand from Singapore was surprised to learn she couldn't bring in live plants to grow in her garden.

Detector dog Hunter indicated on the passenger's handbag at Auckland Airport, resulting in the detection of live cuttings.

When asked why the cuttings hadn't been declared, the passenger replied, "I didn't know I needed to. I wanted to plant them in my garden and give them out to the community, as you can't get these plants here."

A full baggage search resulted in the seizure of fresh gingers and many types of seeds for sowing. The traveller received a fine and free biosecurity advice (an education letter).



Border activity for June 2024

	June 2023	JUNE 2024
Passenger		
Total arrivals	406,061	430,514
NZ/Australia	272,232	291,842
Rest of world	133,829	138,672
Risk items seized	9,061	7,544
Risk items treated or destroyed	8,434	5,014
Infringement notices	523	598
Mail		
Mail items screened	1,564,535	873,197
Mail items requiring further inspection	1,783	1,346
Risk mail items treated or destroyed	275	184
Sea Containers		
Sea containers arrivals	60,209	59,258
Sea containers inspected	3,758	3,520
Cargo		
Cargo lines of interest to MPI	17,739	16,930
Cargo lines inspected	5,111	4,803
Cargo lines treated, reshipped or destroyed	980	833



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Diane McDermott
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