

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Question: AQIS 01

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 33

Senator O'Brien asked:

What sort of material [was voluntarily destroyed]?

Answer:

All citrus trees in block 182 were destroyed by burning in a two foot deep pit and the ash completely covered with soil.

BUDGET ESTIMATES, 25, 26 MAY 2005 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Question: AQIS 02

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 34

Senator Heffernan asked:

When was the last inspection of that 18 months monitoring period? Could you tell us who actually carried out the inspections and could you give us the dates of those inspections?

Answers:

The last inspection was conducted on 10 December 2002.

The following table outlines the inspection dates and the person who conducted each inspection.

Date Inspected	Inspected by
26 July 2001	Mr Steven Watson (AQIS Senior Compliance Officer) Mr Tony Young (AQIS Senior Compliance Officer) Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) Mr Bill Crowe (AQIS Quarantine Entomologist) Mr Bill Harper (AQIS Quarantine Officer) Mr Shane Richardson (AQIS Quarantine Officer) Mr Dan Smith (Qld Department of Primary Industries Officer)
27 July 2001	Mr Steven Watson (AQIS Senior Compliance Officer) Mr Tony Young (AQIS Senior Compliance Officer) Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) Mr Bill Crowe (AQIS Quarantine Entomologist)
<i>Under the Deed of Arrangement</i>	
24 October 2001	Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) Mr Steven Day (AQIS Senior Inspection officer)
5 December 2001	Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist)
1 May 2002	Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) Dr Jo Luck (Molecular Plant Pathologist, Department of Natural Resources and Energy, Victoria)
10 December 2002	Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) Mr Stephen Gillow (AQIS Quarantine Officer)

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Question: AQIS 03

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 34

Senator Heffernan asked:

How long does it take to inspect an orchard?

Answer:

The inspections and collection of samples took approximately one day on each occasion.

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Question: AQIS 04

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 34

Senator Heffernan asked:

Could you give us the details set out on a map of what blocks they did inspect in each inspection? Were any of those blocks then subsequently found to be infected with canker? We will ask you to provide us with the fact or the fiction of where they went for a start and then blow me down if later on from where they went perhaps canker turned up. What I am trying to look for is whether the outbreaks of canker were outside the inspected area or inside the inspected area. What did they do with the samples they took away?

Answer:

Attached are copies of two maps. One was provided by Evergreen Farms and annotated by Dr Vanessa Brake (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) showing the citrus blocks that were inspected by AQIS officers and from which samples were taken. The second map was provided by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and indicates the blocks where citrus canker was detected in 2004.

The following table lists the inspection dates and the blocks that were inspected on each occasion.

Date Inspected	Citrus Blocks Inspected and Sampled
26 & 27 Jul 2001	Block182
24 Oct 2001	Block 182
5 Dec 2001	Blocks 110, 122, 129, 130, 142, 144, 150, 151, 152, 171, 172, 173
10 Dec 2002	Blocks 171, 172, 173

Of these blocks, citrus block 171 was subsequently found in 2004 to be infected with citrus canker.

The samples of citrus taken were sent to the AQIS Eastern Creek Plant Quarantine Station for testing and analysis.

The citrus samples (plants) were potted up in an attempt to develop healthy vegetative material. Extracts were taken from leaf material and subjected to various diagnostic and varietal tests at the AQIS Eastern Creek Plant Quarantine Station, NSW Department of Agriculture - Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute Camden, and CSIRO Merbein.

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Samples were taken from the grapevine material and these were sent to Knoxfield (Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Energy) for diagnostic testing. The grapevines were potted up in an attempt to develop further vegetative material for varietal and further disease screening.

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Question: AQIS 05

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 35

Senator Heffernan asked:

Samples were taken away for testing during the original AQIS raid in 2001. They were tested for diseases and also to determine what variety those samples were. What did that variety test show?

Answer:

The following table lists the varietal tests that were conducted and the results of those tests.

Date test completed	Performed by	Test type	Result
2/8/01	Mrs Patricia Barkley (National Citrus Improvement Manager – Aus Citrus) Dr Cathy Knox (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist) Mr Kevin Davis (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist)	Visual comparison (leaf)	Inconclusive
10/8/01	Dr Stephen Sykes (Sub-Program Leader - CSIRO Merbein)	Visual comparison (leaf)	Inconclusive
12/8/01	Dr Stephen Sykes (Sub-Program Leader - CSIRO Merbein)	Enzyme separation	Inconclusive
13/2/02	Dr Stephen Sykes (Sub-Program Leader - CSIRO Merbein)	Visual comparison	Variety not Imperial. Could not distinguish between Ponkan and Emperor

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13/2/02	Dr Stephen Sykes (Sub-Program Leader - CSIRO Merbein)	Leaf isozymes	Variety not Imperial. Could not distinguish between Ponkan and Emperor
26/6/03	Mrs Patricia Barkley (National Citrus Improvement Manager – Aus citrus) Mr Kevin Davis (AQIS Quarantine Plant Pathologist)	Visual comparison (fruit)	Variety not Imperial. Could not distinguish between Ponkan and Emperor

Question: AQIS 06

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 35

Senator Heffernan asked:

Does the fruit on these trees look like the Chinese variety, Conkin mandarin?

Answer:

Scientific officers from Aus Citrus and CSIRO have advised that they cannot determine whether the fruit is 'Ponkan' or 'Emperor'.

Question: AQIS 07

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 38

Senator O'Brien asked:

What was the nature of the investigations into the source of this material?

Answer:

AQIS undertook variety testing of the citrus, which would assist with tracing the origin of the material. This testing was not conclusive due to the poor quality of the plant material available for the tests.

AQIS Senior Compliance officers made enquiries to corroborate claims e.g. checks of AQIS databases for permits to import plant material; travel checks on relevant parties; enquiries of State Departments of Agriculture relating to citrus varieties; scientific 'assessment of risk'; coordination with Queensland Department of Primary Industry (QDPI) regarding execution of search warrant.

Question: AQIS 08

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 39

Senator O'Brien asked:

The term you used was 'definitive evidence.' What does that mean?

Answer:

Definitive evidence would be a varietal test clearly indicating the variety.

Question: AQIS 09

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 39-40

Senator Heffernan asked:

Who would have done those tests? So it would be possible to get the details.

Answer:

The complete range of tests conducted on all samples collected from the PCP property are listed in the attached tables.

Question: AQIS 10

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 41

Senator O'Brien asked:

Do you know of any other deeds of arrangement—ones that you have not experienced? Perhaps you could take this question on notice: have any other such deeds of arrangement being entered into by AQIS in the past and how many?

Answer:

AQIS has not identified any other "Deed of Arrangement".

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Question: AQIS 11

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 41

Senator O'Brien asked:

Is there a judgment that the committee can see which would give us insight into the reasons of the court?

Answer:

A copy of the Reasons for Judgment of the Federal Court of 17 August 2001 (Justice Keifel) is attached.

A copy of the Reasons for Judgment of the Full Federal Court of 12 October 2001 (Justices Whitlam, Dowsett, and Stone) is attached.

Question: AQIS 12

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 44

Senator O'Brien asked:

I note it was agreed that in certain circumstances AQIS would meet the costs associated with the destruction and disposal of citrus plants on the property. Did AQIS eventually have to meet any of this cost?

Answer:

No.

Question: AQIS 13

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 46

Senator O'Brien asked:

So you do not hold samples of the area in which the disease was discovered in 2004, from back in 2001? It is not the same block, clearly? The samples that you took back to Badgery's Creek, were from a block that was destroyed? Why did you pick those samples from that block?

What was the allegation, that they planted a row of trees that came from Woop Woop? And you allegedly took samples from trees or cuttings? Was it alleged that the whole block with illegally imported material had some trees with grafts or whatever on them?

Answer:

Samples currently held by AQIS at the Eastern Creek Plant Quarantine Station were collected from citrus block 182 because this was the location where the informant claimed that the alleged illegally imported citrus had been planted. All citrus trees on this block were subsequently destroyed on 24 October 2001.

It was alleged that citrus block 182 contained trees which had been grafted with illegally imported material. AQIS collected samples from trees on citrus block 182.

Question: AQIS 14

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 47

Senator Heffernan asked:

Would it be possible to get a copy of the record of interview for this committee?

Answer:

AQIS Investigators took a statement from the informant (Mr Gillies). Mr Watson (an AQIS investigator at that time) also provided a statement on his interview with Mr Gillies in the form of a Federal Court affidavit. Both documents are attached.

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Question: AQIS 15

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 47

Senator O'Brien asked:

Just to make it clear, was the block that was destroyed the block identified to AQIS as containing material which had been illegally imported? How did AQIS identify that block? Clearly, you were given some information orally. Were you given a map?

Answer:

All citrus trees in block 182 were destroyed. It was alleged by the informant that block 182 contained trees which had been grafted with illegally imported material.

Two documents (a hand drawn map and a row/tree reference) were provided by the informant identifying the location of blocks, trees and facilities on the Evergreen Farms property. Copies of those documents are attached.

Question: AQIS 16

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 48

Senator Heffernan asked:

Let's go right back to when they were put in the ground. They were somehow smuggled into Australia in what form and what shape? How much room would it have taken to smuggle them in? How big were they? A foot, two feet, two inches, half an inch?

Given the crisis, no-one here honestly knows? Were they things they could just run along and plant? Did they have to graft them? What did they do? How did it happen?

When you were looking at the trees they were grafted onto, was it a partial graft on a tree to get more tissue or were they grafted on rootstock which produced just the foreign material or was it grafted onto a tree using just two trunks of the tree as other material?

Was it one or 50 or a container full?

Answer:

Allegations as to the modus operandi used in the alleged smuggling are detailed in the statements of the informant Mr Gillies and the statement of Mr Watson, the AQIS Senior Compliance Officer who conducted the initial AQIS investigations. The statements refer to comments provided by a person who had been employed at Evergreen Farms as a "budder" noting that the scions were "about 4 to 6 inches long".

It was alleged that the material was in the form of scions. Scions would normally be used as grafting material.

Question: 17

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 49

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you get us, on notice, the exact details of the timing of the briefings of the minister and the director of quarantine? If there is a documentary brief can the committee have a copy of it?

Answer:

The Minister was briefed about the signing of the Deed of Arrangement by AQIS Minute dated 26 February 2002.

The Director of Quarantine was briefed about the signing of the Deed of Arrangement by AQIS Minute dated 24 October 2001.

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Question: 18

Topic: Citrus Canker Eradication

Hansard Page: 49

Senator Heffernan asked:

Were there allegations of illegal importation of grape cuttings? Do we know whether it was half a boxful or a boxful? Can you get all that detail for us?

Answer:

Mr Gillies, the informant, signed statement of 17 July 2001, says:

“Between September 2000 and November 2000 Mr Cea told me that he had imported a large amount of his budwood and seeds, without Quarantine approval. He informed me that he has imported the budwood in the form of:

1. Grape cuttings – 2 red varieties and 1 white variety – the white being “Melissa”, and the reds “Autumn Royal” and “Camellia”. Some 600 cuttings have been grafted onto vines, of which approximately forty (40) are still growing.”

Mr Gillies also stated:

“In talking to me of the importations, he stated that all of the cuttings have been smuggled in, whilst hidden in bags of tea and that both seeds and cuttings arrived between September and November, 2000.”

Question: AQIS 19

Topic: Brazilian Beef – Permit Applications from Brazil

Hansard Page: 95

Senator O'Brien asked:

The two permits for imports have been suspended. Is that right?

Mr Cahill—The permits that were issued under the policy for imports from Brazil have been revoked.

Senator O'BRIEN—And there were two permits?

Dr Clegg—There were something like 11 permits.

CHAIR—How many applications were not processed?

Dr Clegg—I do not think there were any, but I can check that for you. We did not have hundreds of applications.

Answer:

Eleven import permits in total were issued for uncanned beef products from Brazil before the policy was suspended. All import permits were revoked. One application for beef from Brazil had not been finalised at the time the import conditions were suspended.

Question: AQIS 20

Topic: Beef Imports: Product labels

[Country of origin labelling for imported beef products]

Hansard Page: 96

Senator Heffernan asked:

The three containers came in and went to the soup factory. What supervision is made, by whoever the appropriate authorities are, of what goes on the label, as in 'Made in Australia' or 'Bully beef: souped here but cooked in Brazil'? Do they identify what you are actually eating when you buy the can of bully beef?

Answer:

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) have joint responsibility for regulating the safety of imported food as part of the broader food regulation framework. FSANZ is responsible for conducting risk assessments of foods, including imported foods, maintaining the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Food Standards Code) and advising AQIS of the tests to be applied to imported food. AQIS is responsible for conducting the necessary inspections, verifications and tests at the border, in accordance with advice from FSANZ.

In addition to the role of AQIS and FSANZ in administering the Imported Food Programme (IFP), the State and Territory health authorities have responsibility for ensuring all foods, whether domestically produced or imported, meet the requirements of the Food Standards Code, at the point of sale.

All imported and locally produced food is required to comply with Australia's laws including the requirements for country of origin labelling in the Food Standards Code. This requires all packaged food (including canned beef products) to identify the country in which the food was made or produced. If the food contains ingredients from more than one country, this needs to be identified on the label as well – either by including the name of the countries, or by a statement such as “made from local and imported ingredients”.

Question: AQIS 21

Topic: Wheat Shipments [Inspection]

Hansard Page: 15

Senator O'Brien asked:

Yesterday we talked about the wheat shipments and we were told about a role that AQIS plays in assessing the shipment before it leaves. I wonder if you could explain that process for me. On reflection, I did not quite understand the routine that AQIS was involved in when assessing a shipment before it leaves. For example, is an assessment made before it is loaded, as it is loaded or after it is loaded and what actually happens? How broad is the sampling? How can you be sure you have a representative sample of a whole shipment when there are thousands of tonnes et cetera?

Answer:

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) has a three stage system for inspecting grain for export as prescribed in the *Grain, Plants and Plant Product Orders 1985*.

Firstly, AQIS inspects the vessel before loading commences to ensure the vessel is free from infestible residues, rodents and insects. If the vessel does not meet the standards required, the vessel's Master is issued a "Treatment Order" (Schedule 4 Clauses 26, 27 or 53) to clean the vessel. Reinspection is conducted once the Master advises that the treatment has been completed. If the vessel meets the standards AQIS issues a "Loading Permit" (Order 20).

Secondly, AQIS inspects the export flow path before export commences to confirm that it is free from insects, rodents and rodent droppings. If there is evidence of contamination and or infestation on or near the flow path, loading cannot commence until the export flow path is free from contamination and or infestation.

Thirdly, AQIS inspects a representative sample (2.25 litres per 33 tonnes) of the grain. Samples are drawn by diverter or pelican samplers automatically from the grain stream as it travels to the vessel.

Question: AQIS 22

Topic: Checking procedures [Grain Contamination Reports]

Hansard Page: 15

Senator O'Brien asked:

On how many occasions have your checking procedures been questioned in the sense that there has been a suggestion of a contaminant in a shipment after it has been checked by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and you have not discovered it?

Answer:

There have been two incidents of a National Plant Protection Organisation reporting contamination in a shipment after it was inspected by AQIS (Karnal bunt allegations in Pakistan and carboxin contaminated barley in China).

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Question: AQIS 23

Topic: US meatworks audits

Hansard Page: 17

Senator O'Brien asked:

Have our export works ever been subject to an enforcement audit?

Answer:

The export meat industry was subject to a detailed inspection audit by the United States (US) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) in 1999, although it was not called an enforcement audit. FSIS undertakes annual audits of Australia's export meat industry, although usually only one or two auditors participate. In 1999 however, a team of four FSIS auditors undertook a review of Australia's export meat industry that was analogous to the current enforcement audit.

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Question: AQIS 24

Topic: Cocos Island Quarantine Station

Hansard Page: 20 - 21

Senator O'Brien asked:

What has been expended in the last 12 months, other than for the preparation for the leased area, for maintaining the property and controlling the weeds, grasses and the like?

There is no-one on the island who has any responsibility for maintaining that property?

Answer:

The amount spent on property maintenance since June 2004 is \$3,545.

There is not an Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) representative on the Island. AQIS has an informal arrangement with the local Australian Federal Police (AFP) who advise when the grass at the Cocos Island Quarantine Station needs to be slashed.

Other maintenance has not been undertaken as AQIS is intending to dispose of the property.