

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 10

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Cost of training detector dogs

Proof Hansard page: 20 (21/05/2012)

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK: Okay. So you do not need any more dogs. What is the cost to prepare each one of these dogs?

Mr Chapman: I would have to take that on notice, but there is quite intensive training of both the dog and the handler.

Answer:

The cost to prepare and train a detector dog for initial deployment is currently approximately \$22 000.

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Question: 31

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Salary details, Korean imports

Proof Hansard page: 57 (21/05/2012)

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK: You say in answer to question 25 that the costs associated with detection, storage and analysis of the Korean products is \$298 427 excluding staff salary costs. How much would we have expended in staffing?

Mr Chapman: I would have to take that on notice, work it out and come back to you.

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's staff expenditure was approximately \$558 094.80 during the Hayride campaign.

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Question: 32

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Overview of staff activities

Proof Hansard page: 58 (21/05/2012)

Senator COLBECK asked:

Dr O'Connell: What Mr Terpstra is saying is that we probably cannot account minute by minute for it. We can provide you with a broad estimate, which will give you a sense of scale, if you like, and close enough to say how many staff have been involved in this for how long. It will not be to the plus or minus five per cent, but it will be close.

Senator COLBECK: I am happy with that.

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry resourced the investigation with an estimated 94 staff who worked approximately 14 000 hours.

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Question: 38

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Screening domestic passengers on international flights

Proof Hansard page: 64 (21/05/2012)

Senator XENOPHON asked:

Senator XENOPHON: How often does that happen, though? How often do you screen domestic passengers on those international flights?

Ms Hutchison: I can get some details.

Senator XENOPHON: Please take it on notice.

Answer:

Passengers travelling domestically on international flights occurs daily with such passengers identified by an orange 'D' sticker applied to their boarding pass by the airline at check-in.

On arrival at their destination, these passengers disembark at the international terminal with any remaining international travellers. Domestic passengers are identified by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and directed to Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Biosecurity for assessment and further screening if necessary.

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Question: 39

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Permission for an international flight to land at a domestic airport

Proof Hansard page: 65 (21/05/2012)

Senator XENOPHON asked:

Mr Chapman: If it has got the original international passengers on board and it has not turned into a domestic flight, it will land at another international airport. The only exception to that is when special permission is given for an aircraft to land at another airport.

Senator XENOPHON: On notice, can you tell me in which circumstances that permission would be given?

Answer:

International aircraft are subject to biosecurity control and allowed to land at staffed proclaimed international airports, or at proclaimed non staffed and domestic non-proclaimed airports if permission is sought ten days prior to the landing taking place.

Permission is generally only granted for landings at non-prescribed airports for charter flights or for trials of new international routes.

The exception to this would be under emergency conditions due to an aircraft malfunction or passenger misadventure (eg heart attack).

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Question: 54

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Initiatives to streamline international mail handling

Proof Hansard page: 102 (21/05/2012)

Senator EDWARDS asked:

Senator EDWARDS: The department and Australian Customs and Border Protection have also successfully completed mail-screening trials at two of Australia Post's international mail centres. As a result, a number of initiatives have been implemented to streamline international mail handling across four international mail centres. I may have missed that before, so please pull me up. These initiatives are new. Are they working? Have you addressed them? Is there a cost benefit? Have they had any failures?

Ms Mellor: I will take this question on notice and get you further detail. We have had a number of initiatives with Australian Customs and Border Protection in mail centres, including agreeing on country-of-origin lists for mail inspection so that we know who is looking at what and when. We do some joint work in X-ray as well, sharing resource load there, but we do our secondary inspection quite differently because we are looking for different risk material. We are working with Australia Post to also look at how Australia Post can assist right at the front end of the process, so we have got a number of trials. They are successful. They are about efficiency and effectiveness. They are not driving for savings in clearance or anything like that. They are looking for effectiveness, to see how we can work better together in a tripartite way between Australia Post, the Australian Customs Service and us.

Answer:

The trials identified that single border agency inspection/screening of specific cohorts of mail effectively addresses border risks for both the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Biosecurity and Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. These trials have resulted in a number of new initiatives including developing joint risk assessments and training and working closely with Australia Post to improve presentation of mail. These initiatives have increased efficiency while ongoing assurance processes provide confidence that border risks are being appropriately managed.

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Question: 166

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Detector dog training and ongoing costs

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. What is the training cost for a detector dog?
2. What are the ongoing costs for detector dogs (veterinary fees, food etc)?

Answer:

1. The cost to train a detector dog for initial deployment is approximately \$22 000.
2. The annual cost to operate the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Biosecurity Detector Dog Operations nationally is approximately \$9.5 million dollars. This includes employee expenses and supplier expenses such as kennelling, dog food, veterinary costs, dog procurement, dog equipment and dog transport.

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Question: 173

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Reviews and Reporting

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. QON 160 February 2012 identified the review into industry training associated with AQIS co-regulatory arrangements was “terminated because the department’s expectations were not met in the report provided”. In what ways did the report provided not meet the department’s expectations?
2. If this report was not completed, how is the review into industry training associated with AQIS co-regulatory arrangements now being undertaken?

Answer:

1. In 2010 the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) engaged a consultant to evaluate current industry training. DAFF stipulated in the request for quote that the evaluation ‘investigate, report and make recommendations’ on:
 - the effectiveness of current industry training policy in delivering required government objectives for co-regulation arrangements
 - the efficiency of the department’s approach to the delivery of industry training
 - improvements to the current training arrangements including an examination of national best practice.

DAFF received a draft report from the consultant in May 2011 which failed to adequately address any of the above key points asked for in the request for quote. For example, the draft report identified that industry was satisfied with the training it received but failed to adequately assess whether the current arrangements for industry training achieved their objectives and met the department’s requirements.

2. DAFF is developing a policy that articulates the requirements for and delivery of industry training. It will work closely with industry to ensure that training can be efficiently delivered and will meet the needs of both government and industry. DAFF is also exploring opportunities for aligning DAFF training with that of the Customs and Border Protection Service.

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Question: 187

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: IT System Overhaul

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Ms Mellor indicated the expected date of the business case for reforming the biosecurity IT systems was 2015, what are the consequences of the department having to continue to work with systems Ms Mellor described as “quite old. In fact I would not call it a system.”
2. How does the inefficiency of the existing system impact on the cost of service to exporters, importers and other clients of the division?
3. How does the inefficiency of the existing system impact on the ability of Australia to respond to illegal activities and biosecurity threats such as the recent illegal importation of product from Korea.

Answer:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) information and communication technology (ICT) environment, in particular systems servicing frontline operations, is subject to a level of system outages; which, in some instances can affect the services provided to the department’s clients.

To address these issues, DAFF has established a dedicated information services division to develop an enterprise wide approach to architecture, infrastructure and data management to support the department’s business including biosecurity operations. Through the division, the department is delivering substantial client/business-focused ICT projects. These include systems to support the Export Certification Program at a cost of \$9.8 million (including the Audit Management System (AMS), Tracking Animal Certification for Export (TRACE) and Manual of Importing Country Requirements (MICoR)) as well as support for industry compliance with import requirements, permit issuing and clearance of goods at a cost of \$43.8 million (Biosecurity Import Conditions (BICON) database).

In addition, the Australian Government invested \$4.2 million in 2011–12 for development of a second pass business case for options to upgrade DAFF’s ICT systems to better support biosecurity operations and \$19.8 million over three years in the 2012-13 Budget for remediation and stabilisation of critical infrastructure and data storage across the department’s ICT environment. This funding will be used to develop and provide the infrastructure to support enhanced and modernised data collection, storage and analysis as well as improve stability in business operations.

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Question: 187 (continued)

2. Inefficiencies in existing ICT systems can, in some instances, lead to a slowdown in the clearance of goods across the border which can lead to flow on costs for business.
3. The department's ability to identify and respond to illegal importations such as food products from Korea is not affected by limitations with the existing ICT systems.

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Question: 189

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Illegal importation of product from Korea
Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. How was the illegally imported product from Korea traced so that it could be retrieved in Australia?
2. Was the IT system able to trace product from manufacturer / source in Korea to the point of sale in Australia?

Answers:

1. The importers of the goods provided information to Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) investigators about where and to whom they had sold the goods. DAFF used this information to trace the goods to retail stores and premises.
2. The question does not specify an IT system and therefore cannot be answered.

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Question: 190

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Illegal importation of product from Korea
Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

What have been the key lessons from the illegal importation of product from Korea?

Answer:

The identification by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) of illegal importations from Korea through Operation Hayride and subsequent operations has demonstrated that the reforms being implemented to Australia's biosecurity system are enabling greater focus on risks posed to Australia's biosecurity status. The reforms, including targeted campaigns and the development of intelligence and new profiling capabilities, have improved the government's ability to identify unlawful imports.

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Question: 191

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Standard Operating Procedures

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. What changes have been made to standard operating procedures and associated management tools as a consequence of the activities associated with tracing, retrieving and disposal of the illegally imported product from Korea?
2. Please provide a copy of standard operating procedures, highlighting the amended sections.

Answer:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has developed guidelines for staff undertaking post border recovery activities. These guidelines were developed after the events associated with the illegal importation from Korea of prohibited products to support future recovery actions.
2. Please see **Attachment 1:** Guidelines for Post Border Recovery Operations.

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Question: 192

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Training procedures

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. What changes have been made to the training procedures as a consequence of activities associated with tracing, retrieving and disposal of the illegally imported product from Korea?
2. Please provide a copy of relevant training procedures, highlighting the amended sections.

Answer:

1. A series of aids have been developed to assist Biosecurity Officers in these inspections. These include guides for dealing with difficult clients, guides to assist in the identification of potentially non compliant goods (including photos and label details (translated) of goods previously assessed as non compliant), plus brief translation guides to commonly used meat terms in a range of languages.
2. Please refer to the answer to Question 1.

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Question: 193

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Illegal importation

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. How many other similar instances have there been since the discovery of illegally imported product from Korea?
2. Is project Abercorn a similar operation to Hayride?
3. How many other operations have been completed or are currently underway?

Answers:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has conducted two further campaigns since Operation Hayride. Operation Abercorn and Operation Balmain.
2. Yes.
3. In addition to Operations Balmain and Abercorn, two further operations are planned in coming months

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Question: 194

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Illegal importation

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Does the division have a specific budget for undertaking investigations such as operation Hayride and Abercorn?
2. If so, what is the budgeted expenditure for 2012-13, including staff costs and travel expenses.
3. What percentage of the Quarantine Operations budget does this represent?

Answer:

1. The cost of these operations are included in the budget of the division's Performance Targeting and Effectiveness Program (PTEP).
2. The total PTEP budget for 2012-13 is \$2 539 788. Included is staffing costs of \$1 869 015 and travel of \$42 020.
3. This represents approximately 0.83 per cent of the total Quarantine Operations Division budget.

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Question: 195

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Risk profiles

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

Does the division have a specific program or project to test the risk profiles and assumptions that underpin the risk profiles of material entering Australia?

Answer:

Yes.

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Question: 196

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Reconciliation of quarantined material

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Does the division have procedures to ensure that all quarantined material held in commercial premises is retrieved in a timely manner?
2. What payments are made to commercial premises holding quarantined material on behalf of DAFF Biosecurity?
3. Are these payments based on the length of time the material is held, the size of materials held or both?
4. Are there KPIs relating to retrieval of quarantined materials from commercial premises?
5. If so, what are these KPIs?

Answers

1. Yes
2. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is charged at standard commercial rates.
3. Costs depend on the charging regime of the commercial premises concerned.
- 4 and 5. No

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Question: 197

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Testing protocols

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

What testing protocols, procedures or guidelines exist regarding verification of composition of imported products?

Answer:

Imported products are electronically classified into tariff classifications in the Australian Custom's and Border Protection Service (AC&BPS's) Integrated Cargo System.

Imported products of interest to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) Biosecurity are routed from the Integrated Cargo System to an internal DAFF electronic system called AIMS (AQIS' Import Management System).

Biosecurity officers apply Import Conditions from the Import Conditions Database (ICON) (which is publicly accessible) and/ or ICON Permit conditions to the imported products.

The import conditions specify requirements such as government to government certification, manufactures statements, commercial invoices, lot codes, marks and numbers and bills of lading. These are compared against what has been declared by the brokerage/importer.

If contamination is identified, certain commodities can be sent for further identification and tested for composition. Additional documentation concerning product ingredients may be requested using ICON and internal DAFF manuals as guidelines. Material may be referred for expert advice in DAFF and exporting authorities may also be contacted to provide additional information.

When higher risk commodities are being imported further testing to address biosecurity concerns is conducted: Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) testing are both required to confirm the presence/absence of undeclared meat in food products from high risk countries. These tests are carried out by third party, independent NATA accredited laboratories.

The Department's Imported Food Inspection Scheme monitors imported food for compliance with Australian food standards as laid down in the Food Standards Code.

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Question: 197 (continued)

Labelling is assessed at inspection and the ingredients checked for compliance with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

Samples of the food may also be taken for analysis for microbiological, chemical residue or contaminant testing in accredited independent laboratories to verify compliance with Australian food standards.

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Question: 199

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Biosecurity risk and incoming passengers

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. From responses to previous Questions on Notice, it appears the Incoming Passenger Card is considered to cover the risks of disease entry to Australia via incoming passengers. Is this correct?
2. What are the other ways that passengers may be identified as being a biosecurity risk?
3. Response to QON 196 indicates that "where contamination is detected" that it will be dealt with. How is fungal or bacterial contamination detected on incoming passengers?
4. How is contamination "dealt with"?

Answer:

- 1 and 2. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) uses a number of methods to determine whether passengers may be a biosecurity risk. These include assessment of the IPC, questioning and observation. Profiles and intelligence are also used to assess whether particular passengers may be more likely than others to carry biosecurity risk material. The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service may also refer passengers with biosecurity risk material to DAFF for actioning.
3. It is not operationally feasible or practical to screen passengers, or their baggage or clothing, for fungal or bacterial contamination.
4. Items of biosecurity concern may be cleaned, treated (such as chemical, fumigation, temperature, gamma irradiation), seized and destroyed or exported from Australia. The actions taken depend on the nature of the risk and/or the owner's preferred option.

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Question: 294

Division/Agency: Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: International flights

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

- a. What criteria are used by AQIS to categorise a flight as an International flight?
- b. What checks and inspections must be completed before the aircraft stops being considered as an International flight?
- c. Is there any legislative basis that prevents a partially quarantine-cleared aircraft from departing a 'first point of entry' with the intention of landing at a domestic rather than an International airport?
- d. What inspections or clearances must be completed at first point of entry and what may be deferred to on-ports?
- e. Are disinsection protocols limited to the cabin and cargo holds only? Are there any requirements for physical biosecurity inspections of other aircraft cavities such as landing gear bays?
- f. Is there any difference in treatment and disposal protocols for human waste from International flights compared to domestic flights?
- g. Dr O'Connell offered to confirm with Jetstar that their so-called 'tag' flights are compliant with AQIS protocols [RAT Estimates Hansard 21 May 12 P65].
- h. Can AQIS confirm that that all Australian holders of AOCs that permit scheduled international operations have adequate safeguards in place to prevent an uncleared or partially-cleared aircraft from operating to other than an international airport?
- i. How does AQIS monitor compliance with the entry requirements?

Answer:

- a. All inbound international aircraft are designated in the *Quarantine Act 1908* under section 17 as overseas aircraft, and are subject to Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) control.
- b. All aircraft arriving in Australia must be granted pratique pursuant to section 27B of the *Quarantine Act 1908*. Pratique is granted unless the captain reports prescribed information such as illnesses or live animals onboard. If prescribed symptoms detailed under Part 2 Division 1 Regulation 6 are reported, DAFF, on behalf of the Department of Health and Aging, conducts an interview with the ill traveller. Provided the illness is not of quarantine concern, the aircraft will be granted pratique.

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Question: 294 (continued)

For aircraft that do not have commercial cleaning and waste arrangements approved by DAFF, an inspection is undertaken by a DAFF officer to ensure the aircraft is free of all quarantine waste.

Once pratique is granted and if all imported goods are removed from the aircraft in accordance with DAFF requirements, the aircraft is no longer subject to quarantine.

If all imported goods are not removed from the aircraft, and the aircraft undertakes a second sector within Australia, then it remains subject to quarantine.

- c. Section 20 of the *Quarantine Act 1908* requires that an overseas aircraft or a prescribed aircraft must land at an approved place. A domestic airport is not an approved place for the landing of goods that are subject to quarantine. An overseas or prescribed aircraft that lands at a non-approved place without prior approval (under section 20AA(2)) commits an offence under the *Quarantine Act*.
- d. Inspections or clearances completed at first point of entry include: pratique processes including disinsection; all animals on board being checked; risk based inspection of accompanied baggage for disembarking passengers and other goods destined for that port; and the removal and appropriate treatment of any waste.

If the flight continues on as an international flight, inspections or clearances completed at the second or subsequent ports include: the risk based inspection of passengers hold and cabin baggage and other goods destined for that port; and the removal and appropriate treatment of any quarantine waste.

- e. Disinsection is completed in accordance with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service/Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry New Zealand disinsection schedule. This covers the cabin and cargo holds of the aircraft. There are no physical inspections for vectors of human concern on other parts of an arriving aircraft.
- f. No
- g. Noted
- h. Refer to response to question 294 (b).
- i. DAFF monitors compliance with entry requirements for aircraft and passengers through electronic reporting, aircraft surveillance and auditing.