



Notice to Industry

11/2009

Review of External Container Inspection Regime (ECIR) process.

Background

AQIS is committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its inspection procedures to help protect Australia's biosecurity and has therefore commenced development of inspection procedures aimed at allocating appropriate levels of resources to more efficiently mitigate the potential quarantine risks posed by containers. This is consistent with Recommendation 44 of the 2008 Quarantine and Biosecurity Review by Roger Beale AO, which recommends the application of "risk return" principles to AQIS inspection efforts.

In addition, as a result of the current global financial crisis and subsequent downturn in import volumes, there are now significant pressures on the Import Clearance Program cost recovery position. In order to reduce operating costs AQIS will be redirecting staff to key activities and from 1 April will no longer be using contract labour to assist in external inspections of containers.

What is changing?

On the basis of historical container risk management procedures, analysis of contamination and throughput data captured since ECIR was implemented, AQIS will be implementing a two phased approach to the risk based ECIR process whilst maintaining current effectiveness levels.

PHASE 1 - to be implemented on 1 April 2009.

- Metropolitan destination containers will continue to be inspected at the gate however AQIS will no longer be removing splash or minor contamination of low risk material.
- Low levels of plant and animal contamination will continue to be removed at the gate.
- Containers with high levels of soil and plant and animal material will be ordered into quarantine and directed for cleaning as per current arrangements.
- Rural destination containers will continue to undergo 6 sided external inspections. All contamination will be required to be removed.
- Giant African Snail risk containers will continue to undergo a 6 sided inspection as per current arrangements.
- Inspection of the tops of containers will no longer be mandatory. Verification inspections will be conducted on a random basis.

PHASE 2

From 1 April AQIS will commence an on-going risk assessment process which will include:

- Sampling soil contamination for analysis.
- Collecting data on the levels and types of contaminants and tracing back containers back to the country of origin.
- Identifying risk pathways by tracing contaminated containers back to port of origin or load port.
- Implementing offshore procedures for high risk pathways to keep risk offshore.

Interim data will be analysed and modifications may be made to container intervention rates and resourcing using a statistical risk model system. Any recommended changes will be implemented in consultation with industry.

In the long term, on-going data collection will be continually fed into a risk return model and resources targeted to identified high risk containers based on the outcomes. AQIS will work closely with industry to determine the best operational approach to identify and intervene with containers

Industry should remain aware of its responsibility to ensure containers are externally clean on import. Presentation of clean containers will continue to assist the clearance process and minimise delays.

Further information

If you require further information please contact Ms Patricia Thornhill on patricia.thornhill@aqis.gov.au or (02) 6272 5020.