



Australian Government

Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity

Horse imports - management of biosecurity risks January to June 2015

Audit report

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2014 the Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity (IIGB) published a report '*Arrangements for oversight of horse biosecurity risk management*'. The report outlined the IIGB's future commitment to an ongoing cycle of review and assessment of the biosecurity risk management controls used by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) for importing horses to Australia.
- 1.2 As part of the IIGB's 2014-15 work program, the IIGB undertook a desktop review of data and documentation relating to the import of horses to Australia during the period January to June 2015.

2 Background

- 2.1 In July 2009, the Australian Government appointed an Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity to enhance the integrity of Australia's biosecurity systems through the independent evaluation and verification of the performance of these programs across the biosecurity continuum – pre-border, border and post-border.
- 2.2 The department allocates significant resources to the on-going monitoring and improvement of the management of biosecurity risks related to the importation of horses. Accordingly, the IIGB pays close attention to the biosecurity risks associated with the importation of horses to Australia, as part of the IIGB's broader annual work program.

Process for importing horses to Australia

- 2.3 Australian biosecurity import conditions allow the import of horses from approved countries that meet strict conditions.
- 2.4 A valid import permit from the department is required to import a horse. The import permit lists all the import conditions that the horse must meet in order to be eligible for import to Australia.
- 2.5 Prior to import, horses spend at least 14 days in pre-export isolation in the exporting country. During this pre-export quarantine period, the health of the horse is monitored and the animal is tested for diseases of biosecurity concern.
- 2.6 Once testing is complete, and if all import conditions have been met, the horse is given permission to be imported to Australia.

3 Audit objective

- 3.1 The objective of this desktop review was to assess the approval processes for:
 - offshore pre-export quarantine (PEQ) premises used for the export of horses to Australia that were approved by the department during the period January to June 2015

- onshore post-arrival quarantine (PAQ) premises used for the import of horses to Australia that were approved by the department during the period January to June 2015.

4 Methodology

4.1 For the period January to June 2015, the IIGB reviewed:

- horse import numbers including individual horse details, import permits, PEQ and PAQ facilities used for each animal
- the approval status for each PEQ premises in exporting countries, including information on all approved, expired and new applications
- any PEQ or PAQ facility audit reports and associated documents prepared by the department during the three months prior to the review period
- details of any biosecurity incidents, including response procedures, reported to the department in the three months prior to the review period.

5 Findings

Offshore PEQ facilities approved for exporting horses to Australia

- 5.1 In the previous review period, June to December 2014, the IIGB assessed the status of approval processes for 19 offshore PEQ facilities approved by the department to import horses to Australia.
- 5.2 For this review period, the IIGB notes that as at the 1st January 2015 there were 21 offshore PEQ facilities approved by the department for exporting horses to Australia.
- 5.3 The IIGB notes that between January and June 2015, the department conducted on-site audits to approve or re-approve five offshore PEQ facilities and one PAQ facility.
- 5.4 The IIGB assessed the approval processes for these five PEQ facilities and the single PAQ facility. The IIGB has no concerns with the approvals granted for these facilities.

Number of horses imported to Australia January to June 2015

- 5.5 The IIGB notes that for the period 20 January 2015 to 27 June 2015, import permits were processed for 155 horses to be imported to Australia through ten offshore PEQ facilities.

Arrangements for importing horses from New Caledonia to Australia

- 5.6 It is noted that in January 2015, under new import conditions, Australia received its first import of horses from New Caledonia.
- 5.7 Horses from New Caledonia arrive in Australia by sea and are released into the Australian horse population if all import conditions have been met.
- 5.8 However, suspected or confirmed exotic disease may require a horse imported from New Caledonia, and any horses it has been in contact with, to be ordered into quarantine while appropriate biosecurity measures are put in place.

Changes to service delivery within the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

- 5.9 On 1 July 2015, the department transitioned its service delivery operations to a client-focussed national model requiring a restructure in responsibility for many of its biosecurity-related programs.
- 5.10 These initiatives are expected to better meet the changing needs of the department's stakeholders, both nationally and internationally. For clients of the department, the changes are expected to result in more convenient, cost-effective and nationally consistent services and products.
- 5.11 The IIGB notes that this client-based national model has necessitated some changes in responsibility for particular biosecurity services across the department. In planning and implementing such wide-ranging changes, effective internal communications are of critical importance, to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The IIGB notes that in relation to delivery of the department's service operations, as with any new program or significant change in responsibilities, there are potential adverse effects that might impact on the level of national biosecurity risk. Such negative impacts might not be immediately apparent.
- 6.2 The IIGB will investigate and consider what biosecurity concerns, if any, have emerged as a result of the decentralisation of the department's service delivery operations relating to the importation of horses into Australia. This will be done as part of the IIGB's next review cycle for horse imports.
- 6.3 The IIGB notes that the department's biosecurity risk management procedures for importing horses to Australia appear to be satisfactory.
- 6.4 No recommendations have been raised as part of this review.

7 Next review cycle

- 7.1 The IIGB's next review cycle for horse imports commenced in January 2016.



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18 February 2016