



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture,**  
**Fisheries and Forestry**

**INTERIM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF BIOSECURITY**

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**Desktop review – the approval of offshore pre-export  
quarantine facilities for importing horses to Australia**

**INTERIM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF BIOSECURITY**

**AUDIT REPORT**

June 2013

No. 2012–13/10

## **Introduction**

The Interim Inspector General of Biosecurity (IIGB) has responsibilities to audit, evaluate and verify biosecurity systems and functions across the entire Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)'s biosecurity continuum. This includes the DAFF system that applies to the importation of horses and other equines to Australia. In light of recent moves toward a risk return approach in biosecurity risk management it is appropriate to balance the IIGB's focus on equine pre-export quarantine (PEQ) facilities with other priorities in the annual audit work program. The IIGB maintains discretion to inspect PEQ facilities on an ad hoc basis and has developed an audit methodology (see Attachment A) to examine the processes undertaken by DAFF in approving offshore pre-export quarantine facilities for importing horses to Australia.

## **Audit objective**

The objective of this review was to undertake, using desktop audits, an assessment of the approval processes for current DAFF approved offshore PEQ facilities used for importing horses to Australia. Based on the audit methodology if issues are identified during the desktop audits the IIGB may conduct overseas inspections visits for the required PEQ facilities.

## **Background**

A PEQ facility is classified as approved if DAFF has given it an approval status of *Full Approval* or *Full Pass*. PEQ facilities are approved for a two year period. In certain circumstances DAFF will approve a PEQ for one consignment only - these will be given the status of *One Consignment Approval*.

## **Fieldwork conducted**

As part of the audit fieldwork the IIGB:

- held discussions with DAFF officers covering the individual aspects of the PEQ requirements for horses
- reviewed a selection of DAFF inspection reports and associated documents, for PEQ premises nominated by the IIGB
- reviewed the standard operating procedures (SOPs), and associated documents, for the selected PEQ premises
- reviewed standard DAFF designed templates used for developing SOPs
- assessed the approval processes DAFF has in place to ensure compliance with the PEQ approval conditions.

During January through to June 2013, there were nineteen PEQ facilities overseas that had either retained their approval, been re-approved or were a new facility given initial approval. Of the nineteen approved PEQ facilities, ten had been assessed by the IIGB during the previous review and were still valid at the time of this review. Consequently, nine approved PEQ facilities were selected and assessed as part of this review, as eight facilities had been re-approval recently and one was a new facility given initial approval.

## Findings and recommendations

For the period noted above, the IIGB found that DAFF's processes to approve offshore pre-export horse facilities for importing horses to Australia were generally satisfactory. The IIGB noted that a *Certification at Port of Export* is required to accompany each consignment. This pertains to the cleaning and disinfection of relevant compartments of the aircraft and aircraft fittings as well as the avoidance of contact with any other horses also being transported at the airport. After reviewing the current import permit, the IIGB recommends that DAFF clarify the wording of the *Certification at Port of Export*, requiring the competent authority's authorised official at the airport/port to attest that the horse(s) have had no contact with equids not of equivalent health status by specifying a linear distance of separation that is in keeping with the standards of the Australian Import Risk Analysis for equines.

### Recommendation 1

DAFF should clarify the wording of the *Certification at Port of Export*, requiring the competent authority's authorised official at the airport/port to attest that the horse(s) have had no contact with equids not of equivalent health status by specifying a linear distance of separation that is in keeping with the standards of the Australian Import Risk Analysis for equines.

The IIGB remains concerned about the potential risks associated with the chain of custody of samples collected for disease exclusion testing during PEQ. As previously reported and recommended to DAFF by the IIGB/IIGHI, there is an in-principle defect in the SOPs for one overseas PEQ that is potentially open for exploitation by vested commercial interests through DAFF's accepting that the operator of the PEQ is handed these samples by the private veterinarian who collects them and that operator then transports them to a courier company to on-carry them to the testing laboratory. The operator of the PEQ should not have any sole point of involvement in the chain of custody of these samples. DAFF responded to the IIGB's previous recommendation to the effect that such controls are the responsibility of the competent authority and DAFF cannot direct the competent authority to vary this procedural arrangement. The IIGB remains concerned about this arrangement.

The IIGB noted that the DAFF approval process for PEQ facilities appears to be suitability comprehensive. It is apparent that this process has undergone improvements in the robustness of overseas inspections and audits by DAFF officers and in the recording of details of findings and assessments.

**[signed]**

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Dr Kevin Dunn  
Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity  
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# Attachment A

