



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

INTERIM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF BIOSECURITY

Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity

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Annual Report 2011–12

To Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	2
THE ROLE OF THE INTERIM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF BIOSECURITY	2
INTERIM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF BIOSECURITY ACTIVITIES IN 2011–12	3
PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERIM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF BIOSECURITY	5
2012–13 AND FUTURE YEARS	5

Introduction

The 2011–12 audit and review activities covered an instructive sub-set of biosecurity services delivered by Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) in as much as they highlighted the variety of systems and challenges facing that organisation in such disparate areas as importation of aquarium fish, food, fertiliser and horses as well as marine biotoxin risk management in the export of abalone.

This year has seen a further evolution of the independent role of the Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity (IIGB). It has been of particular interest to action the requests of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Minister) for incident reviews in the aforementioned areas of fertiliser, foods and abalone. In keeping with the role, the reviews have focussed on biosecurity risk management and an analysis of operational systems with regard to improvement.

The undertaking of these reviews has resulted in the delayed progress of some planned IIGB audit activities for 2011–12. These will be progressed during 2012–13.

An organisational restructure of DAFF in 2011–12 has seen the formation of the IIGB Support Team that is now located in the newly formed Governance Division of the department. An emphasis on strengthening the audit skills base of that team will assist in continuous improvement of the work of the IIGB.

Of strategic relevance to the future role of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity is the proposed new biosecurity legislation to replace the *Quarantine Act 1908* as part of the reforms to Australia's biosecurity system. At the time of finalisation of this report, exposure drafts and regulation impact statement have been released for public consultation.

The role of the Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity

The IIGB is a transitional role while the future statutory position of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity is being developed under the Australian Government's proposed amendments to biosecurity legislation.

On 1 July 2009, the government appointed an Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity. The IIGB role continues with a broad scope to audit, investigate and review the biosecurity systems and risk management measures that are the responsibility of the department's biosecurity divisions. Audits or investigations may be commissioned by the Minister, or developed as part of an annual work program by the IIGB. An indicative annual work program is listed on the IIGB website (<http://www.daff.gov.au/about/publications/interim-inspector-general-of-biosecurity>). The IIGB role subsumed that of the Interim Inspector-General of Horse Importation, which was established following the inquiry concerning the outbreak of Equine Influenza in Australia in 2007.

The IIGB role is independent of the department's biosecurity divisions. The IIGB reports to the Minister and makes key findings and recommendations publicly available. The IIGB remains

accountable to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on matters of governance and administration.

Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity activities in 2011–12

Table 1 outlines the activities undertaken by the IIGB in 2011–12, while a summary of each activity follows.

Table 1 Audit activities undertaken by the IIGB in 2011–12.

Activity	Audit/review title and objective	Status
Incident review	An examination of factors that led to release into Australia of a consignment of soil (declared as fertiliser) and interception at the border of another consignment of soil (declared as fertiliser)	Completed
Application of IIGB equine pre-export quarantine methodology	Assessment to determine the necessity of IIGB desktop audits and/or overseas inspection audits of offshore horse pre-export quarantine facilities	Ongoing
Incident review	An examination of biosecurity controls associated with the export from Australia of live abalone to China and Hong Kong	In progress
Audit	An examination of the effectiveness of DAFF controls to manage the biosecurity risks in the importation of freshwater and marine ornamental fish	In progress
Incident review	An examination of the biosecurity and quarantine risks associated with the unlawful importation of Korean food detected in December 2010	In progress
Audit	An examination of the effectiveness of biosecurity controls that DAFF has in place for animal breeding material (mammalian semen and ova/embryos only) imported into Australia	In progress
Audit	An examination of the effectiveness of DAFF controls to manage the biosecurity risks for imported uncooked and cooked pig meat	Background research and scoping documents prepared
Audit	An examination of the performance of the systems that DAFF has in place to manage biosecurity risks along entry pathways for international mail and air cargo with a particular focus on mail orders and internet purchases	Background research commenced

Stakeholder consultation and information sharing	
28 September 2011	Information sharing forum with DAFF Biosecurity Executive
15 November 2011	IIGB presentation to Plant Health Australia industry forum on progress in biosecurity reforms with particular emphasis on the IIGB role
28 March 2012	Information sharing forum with DAFF Biosecurity Executive
11 July 2012	Meeting with Dr Mike Bond, CEO of Animal Health Australia
Senate Estimates	
17 October 2011	Appearance before Senate Estimates Committee and subsequent answers to Questions on Notice (QoNs)
21 May 2012	Appearance before Senate Estimates Committee and subsequent answers to QoNs

Fertiliser consignment incident review

In 2011–12, the IIGB examined the factors that led to the release into Australia of a consignment of soil (declared as fertiliser) and the interception at the border of another consignment of soil (declared as fertiliser).

The IIGB noted some vulnerability in border biosecurity risk management procedures relating to this commodity. A high degree of reliance is placed on the integrity of suppliers and the accuracy of declarations. At the time of the particular incidents, based on the low biosecurity risk for the commodity (that is, fertiliser), there was no mandated random inspection in place for fertiliser in bags of less than or equal to 100 kilograms. This meant that soil falsely declared as fertiliser, and ostensibly meeting DAFF's biosecurity requirements, was unlikely to be detected during import clearance.

The IIGB made four recommendations to strengthen biosecurity risk management measures:

- improvements to border clearance procedures for mined and chemical fertiliser imported in less than or equal to 100 kilogram bags
- improvements to reporting requirements for response actions taken in the field
- improved communication between DAFF central and regional offices and the relevant state and territory agriculture departments in the event that biosecurity risk materials have been released into rural areas

- a follow-up surveillance visit, by subject matter specialists, to the farm where the contaminated consignment was transported.

Previous activities of the Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity

During 2011–12 the IIGB Support Team completed a project to include all past IIGB audit recommendations into the departmental database to track and report on the status of each recommendation. All future recommendations will be included in the database.

As at 30 June 2012, the IIGB has issued 65 recommendations. The department has completed actions to remedy 55 of those recommendations. DAFF management report that implementation of the remaining 10 recommendations is in progress.

2012–13 and future years

The performance of the department's biosecurity divisions has remained the principal focus of the IIGB audit and review activities during 2012–13.

The IIGB will finalise the incident reviews on export of abalone and the unlawful importation of Korean food and the audit on importation of freshwater and marine ornamental fish.

In 2012–13, the IIGB aims to continue broadening the scope of audit and review activities across the biosecurity continuum, including DAFF's systems and risk management measures for the:

- expansion of vessel clearance through documentation (Pratique Documentary Clearance)
- imported uncooked and cooked pig meat
- imported animal breeding material
- horse pre-export and post-arrival quarantine facilities
- international mail and air cargo with a particular focus on mail orders and internet purchases.

The IIGB work program will continue to focus on the assessment of the effectiveness and performance of controls and systems used by DAFF to manage biosecurity risks across the biosecurity continuum, while being mindful of new and emerging biosecurity risks as well as those which are ever present.



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