Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

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✦ Improving Quarantine Awareness the eBay Way

In recognition of the increasing popularity of online shopping, AQIS is stepping up its publicity efforts to educate consumers about potential quarantine issues when they order goods from overseas. One example of this is AQIS's recent work with online auction site eBay.

A special quarantine message is being progressively introduced on eBay product screens whenever an Australian buyer is looking to buy or bid for a range of potentially risky goods from overseas. The message reminds buyers that:

> "*Australian quarantine regulations may apply. Before purchasing an item from an international seller, you should ensure that any applicable Australian quarantine regulations are met...AQIS screens international mail and cargo and will seize any items that present a quarantine risk.*"

The message also contains links to AQIS information on what can't be mailed into Australia, and further background on making mail order and internet purchases.

Online retail and auction websites have made it far easier for consumers in Australia to order goods directly from overseas. However, as many of these purchasers don't know about quarantine restrictions placed on certain types of goods, particularly food products, these products are often seized by AQIS officers when items are inspected at international mail centres and air courier facilities.

AQIS believes that the warning screens should result in a reduction in the number of items ordered over the internet that have to be seized at mail centres and at air courier facilities. The initiative should also reduce the number of inquiries and potential complaints from clients to both AQIS and Industry.

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✦ Avoiding the Re-export of Imported Used Machinery

AQIS is reminding all importers about Australia's strict "clean as new" requirements for used machinery entering the country. In particular, AQIS may direct machinery found to be very heavily contaminated to be re-exported overseas, which may involve significant additional time and financial costs for industry. AQIS has recently noted an increase in the number of imported used machines where high levels of contamination have been found, or where it appears no attempt has been made to clean the equipment.

Used machinery, particularly agricultural or mining equipment, represents a significant risk due to their potential to carry a wide range of quarantine risk material, such as soil, plant matter and seeds. All used machinery imported into Australia must be inspected by AQIS on arrival. Where a machine is found to be very heavily contaminated, AQIS may order it to be re-exported overseas, as the risk associated with removing the material in Australia may be too great. Where low levels of contamination are found during

inspection, AQIS may direct the equipment for cleaning at a quarantine approved premises (QAP) with suitable cleaning facilities.

Re-exports were a significant problem for AQIS several years ago, with a number of machines sent back either to their point of origin, or to another country where the required cleaning could be performed. As a result of this, and due to the impact re-exports have on industry, AQIS has been working very closely with importers of these types of goods to increase awareness of quarantine requirements.

A number of systems are in place to assist importers of used machinery to meet Australia's quarantine requirements. These include:

- **Offshore pre-inspection**: Importers can request that a qualified AQIS officer travel overseas to the load port and perform an inspection prior to export. Where potential quarantine concerns are detected, these can then be cleaned offshore, avoiding possible delays once the goods arrive in Australia. The costs associated with this service are generally less than the costs of having the same cleaning performed after arrival in Australia, and significantly less than the cost of re-export.
- **Military and Machinery National Coordination Centre (NCC)**: The NCC is based in Brisbane and provides specialist advice and assistance for importers of machinery and military equipment. They have also produced a series of guides on many of the most common types of imported machinery, detailing the sites where contamination is most commonly encountered by AQIS officers.
- **The AQIS / Industry Machinery Working Group** met in Brisbane on 5 October 2007 to discuss and consider measures to encourage better compliance with import conditions. A range of issues such as third party accreditations are under consideration - further information will be provided if any additional measures are introduced.
- **AQIS website**: Additional information on importing machinery is available from the AQIS website. **Click here to access this information**.

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✦ Information from AQIS / Industry Seminar Series on AQIS Website

AQIS has prepared a list of responses to questions asked at the series of Cargo Industry Seminars held across the country in July/August 2007. **Click here to access the seminar series information**. Examples of the types of issues which arose included the following:

Under the AIMS revenue trial, can brokers still pay by electronic funds transfer (EFT)?
Payment can be made through the Customs Integrated Cargo System (ICS) via EFT. However, companies preferring this option must make an AIMS payment for the total amount in the final service record within 48 hours of the receipt of the final email advice (received via Email Notification).

It is important not to delay the payment any longer than 48 hours, as once AIMS initiates the generation of an invoice in the accounting system, it will no longer handle payments against the entry in an automated manner. If it is not feasible to make payment within 48 hours of finalisation of an entry, then all payments should be made against the invoice issued by AQIS.

Can AQIS reference the ICON case used to determine the applicable import conditions on the quarantine order?
AQIS appreciates the suggestion and is looking at adding this type of referencing during its redevelopment of ICON and AIMS.

Does AQIS notify industry when supplier profiles are removed due to demonstrated compliance with import conditions?
AQIS does not currently notify industry when supplier profiles are removed. It should be noted that even after a profile is removed, the supplier will continue to be subject to AQIS's system of random inspections, which is applied to all suppliers of imported goods entering the country.

Is AQIS intending on reviewing the duplication of information that is required when owning multiple classes of Quarantine Approved Premises (QAPs)?
Yes, AQIS has in place mechanisms that reduce administrative duplication where possible. The QAP renewal process involves the same information requirements, regardless of the number of QAP classes a QAP is approved for. Suggestions for reducing administrative duplication should be directed to the AQIS Industry Cargo Consultative Committee (AICCC) secretariat via email at **aiccc@aiccc.com**.

Customs allows brokers to lodge entries anywhere, where as entries for AQIS must be lodged where the goods are being imported into, are there plans to change this?
AQIS is working toward the establishment of an Entry Management National Coordination Centre in South Australia for this purpose. Rather than going down the path of optional port lodgement, AQIS intends to consolidate its entry management activities into a single centre as far as possible to increase consistency and efficiency, as well as allowing for extended hours of operation to meet industry needs.

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✦ Smorgasbord of Quarantine Risks Uncovered by AQIS During ICE Inspection

The discovery of an exotic mixture of quarantine risk materials during a recent Import Clearance Effectiveness (ICE) inspection highlights the importance of importers and their agents making sure their documentation is in order.

An FCL container of timber items and pots from Indonesia was inspected in Brisbane and found to contain a range of quarantine risk materials, including:

- bark on crates,
- sand in pots,
- seeds sprouting in timber beams, and
- fungus growing on pallets.

The fungus was identified as exotic Malaysian Pole Fungus, which can actively attack and infect both living trees and sawn timber - hence the risk it posed was quite serious. In this case, the goods required treatment before the consignment could be released, while the pallets were sent for fumigation with Ethylene Oxide.

Exotic fungus found growing on pallets imported from Indonesia

The documentation submitted for the consignment included a cleanliness certificate, and a packing declaration stating no timber had been used. But the discrepancies found as part of the ICE inspection meant a supplier / exporter profile was created in the ICS. AQIS also wrote to the supplier / exporter to advise them of the discrepancies. Under the profile, the next five consignments sent to Australia by the supplier/ exporter will be directed by AQIS for a full unpack and inspection on arrival at Quarantine Approved Premises. Once a track record of compliance has been re-established (five consecutive compliant shipments) the profile will be removed. As these additional inspections mean considerable extra costs and delays for the importer, AQIS encourages importers to make sure exporters are aware of AQIS's import requirements.

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✦ Importing Goods Through "Declared" and "Non-declared" Ports

AQIS is reminding all importers that not all Australian ports are allowed to handle all types of imported goods. Restrictions are in place for some types of goods, such as plants and animals, which limits the number of ports they can be imported through.

In general, Section 20D of the *Quarantine Act 1908* requires animals, plants and other goods to be landed at "declared" ports only. These declared ports are in turn listed in further detail within the Quarantine Proclamation 1998. **Click here to view a list of declared ports where certain types of goods can be landed**.

If an overseas vessel wishes to land animals, plants or other goods at a place that is not a declared port, the master, owner or agent of the aircraft or vessel must apply for permission to land the goods.

Application forms are available at **www.aqis.gov.au/20Dapplication**, and must be sent to the AQIS Sea Cargo Unit no less than 10 working days prior to arrival at the non-declared port. Forms can be sent by fax to +61 (2) 6272 4874 or by e-mail to **treat.inspect@aqis.gov.au**. AQIS will inform the applicant in writing of the outcome of the assessment. For further information please contact the AQIS Sea Cargo Unit on +61 (2) 6272 5020.

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✦ Entry Management National Coordination Centre Trial Completed

The electronic finalisation of treatment, re-export and destruction directions will soon be expanded to other regions, following encouraging results of a trial involving treatment providers from Victoria and Western Australia.

The trial of electronic finalisation of treatment, re-export and destruction directions was undertaken by the Entry Management National Coordination Centre (EM NCC) in South Australia. This trial was limited to the administration and electronic clearance of imported goods which have been directed by AQIS for onshore quarantine treatments.

AQIS is currently analysing the information collected during the four week trial, which was held during August and September 2007. Initial findings indicate that the trial was generally successful, although some aspects of the process require further refinement, such as:

- Consistency in information being provided to AQIS to finalise onshore treatments, and
- Timing of final releases being issued and goods being released from quarantine.

AQIS is now developing more detailed guidelines for information requirements and clarifying the provisions of its agreements with approved treatment providers. Once these matters have been addressed, the system will be expanded to other regions.

Participating treatment providers should continue to send their treatment results to the EM NCC in South Australia. To assist AQIS in fine tuning and improving the system, industry participants involved in the testing and review period are invited to provide feedback by contacting the Entry Management Projects Team by phone on (02) 6272 4648, by fax on (02) 6272 5888 or by e-mail at **EMprojects@aqis.gov.au**.

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✦ Summary of documents and alerts released by AQIS Cargo Management in September 2007

Reference Number	Document	Overview
1	**Public Quarantine Alert (PQA) 0526**	Revised import condition for Timber oversize - Not for processing
2	**Notice to Industry 6, 2007-08**	Changes to AQIS Kiln drying requirement for timber
3	**Notice to Industry 7, 2007-08**	20D Approval is required for overseas vessels to land animals, plants or other goods at non-declared ports
4	**Notice to Industry 8, 2007-08**	Completion of testing and review period on treatment results
5	**Imported Food Notice 08/07**	Change to risk category cheeses from New Zealand
6	**Imported Food Notice 09/07**	Tests applied to risk category foods

✦ Contact cargobulletin@aqis.gov.au if you have any queries, suggestions or requests for further information

✦DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY✦