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Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service



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Providing information to the Cargo and Shipping industries on the latest AQIS developments

✦ AEP for Commodities Trial Judged a Success

AQIS has just completed a four week trial extension of the Automatic Entry Processing (AEP) for Commodities scheme, and is planning to make the system available for use by all brokerages before the end of 2006. AQIS would like to thank all the brokers who participated in the trial for their valuable input and suggestions on how to improve the system.

AEP for Commodities will allow accredited brokers to assess documentation for quarantine non-commodity as well as commodity concerns, and direct "in scope" consignments for quarantine action without having to send documents to AQIS, or present documents at an AQIS front counter. Instead, brokers can assess the documents themselves and select an Integrated Cargo System (ICS) processing type based on the results of the documentation assessment.

An initial trial took place in 2004 and played an important part in developing a system that suited the needs of industry, whilst ensuring that quarantine integrity could be maintained. The latest trial, which began last month, covered a range of commodities, including manufactured wooden articles, plywood and veneer, machinery and vehicle parts, non-passenger vehicles and used passenger vehicles.

Once it has been rolled out, AEP for commodities should assist brokers by reducing the time needed to process an entry, reducing the processing cost, allowing entries to be processed outside normal business hours and avoiding the need to attend AQIS offices.

AQIS will provide further information to industry prior to the full introduction of the system, which is scheduled for early November 2006. For any further enquiries about signing up to AEP for Commodities, please contact AQIS at brokeraccred@aqis.gov.au.

✦ AQIS Giant African Snail (GAS) Container Survey Underway

AQIS has started to examine imported shipping containers from a range of countries, as part of the targeted Giant African Snail (GAS) survey. Information collected as part of the survey will be used to improve the information AQIS has about countries representing a potential GAS risk. [Click here to see a list of countries being examined as part of the survey.](#)

As part of the survey, the GAS National Coordination Centre (GAS NCC) located in Brisbane will refer containers from these countries for targeted GAS inspection for a minimum six month period. It is

anticipated that each country will have a minimum of 30 containers directed for targeted GAS inspection over the duration of the survey.

Different approaches will be used to select containers, depending on country of origin:

- **Indonesia:** If arriving direct from Indonesia, the Principal Agent for a vessel must email a vessel bay plan to the GAS NCC at least 48 hours prior to the vessel's arrival. If carrying transhipped Indonesian containers, the Principal Agent must provide a list of all containers on the vessel that have originated from Indonesian ports.
- **All other countries:** Integrated Cargo System (ICS) profiles will be used to identify containers of interest. Where ICS profiles are used, vessel bay plans should not be required, but these may be requested if required information is not obtainable from the ICS report.

Once containers have been identified for targeted GAS inspection, the GAS NCC will distribute inspection lists to regional AQIS contacts, vessel agents and stevedores in line with current GAS procedures. AQIS will then notify local terminals and vessel agents of the requirement to GAS inspect the listed containers. Industry should note that:

- Containers identified for inspection do not have to be stacked as GAS containers, and can be kept in general stacking areas until required for inspection.
- If any infestation is detected there will be no "recall" of containers stowed adjacent to the container in question. However, notification will be provided to AQIS inspectors at wharf gates to be alert to possible contamination risks.

No AQIS inspection charges will be applied for those containers inspected as part of this survey. AQIS will also make every effort to minimise the additional workload at each port and distribute the workload between ports and shipping lines. However, the rates of referral will depend on trade volume and frequency of arrival. [Click here for further information about the survey.](#)

✦ AQIS Client Satisfaction Survey Results for 2006

AQIS's cargo and shipping units continue to improve their levels of service, according to the 2006 AQIS Client Satisfaction Survey. The annual survey provides AQIS with valuable information about the performance of different areas of the organisation. But more importantly, it also notes areas where further improvements could be made. Combining all import categories examined, overall satisfaction was generally high with an average satisfaction rating of 7.3 (out of 10) in 2006. AQIS has maintained and slightly improved on the high overall satisfaction benchmark set in 2002, when the figure was 7.0 out of 10.

Importers

The average satisfaction rating for more than 260 importer clients surveyed was 7.1 out of 10, a figure which has been constant since 2004. A third of respondents said that their overall satisfaction had improved over the last two years, while 38% said they were as satisfied now as they were two years ago. The main factors contributing to improved satisfaction levels were improved efficiency of staff, better communication and improved understanding of business needs. A number of suggestions for improvement also came out of the survey, such as improving staff training and knowledge levels, further improving efficiency and processing, increasing contact with clients and improving accessibility of information.

Brokers

More than 200 brokers were surveyed as part of the process, with the average satisfaction level being 6.6 out of 10. This represented a slight drop from the 6.8 figure recorded back in 2004. About 36% of respondents reported an increased level of satisfaction over the last two years, compared with 46% in 2004. Some of the things AQIS had done to improve satisfaction levels were improved efficiency, better training and increased flexibility to meet industry needs. The most common factors contributing to dissatisfaction were lack of available staff and lack of staff knowledge. Echoing these results, the most common improvement suggested by brokers was having more staff available for clients, followed by having better trained staff with specialist knowledge. Other suggested improvements included increasing accessibility to officers and improving efficiency with faster processing of entries.

Air cargo

The average satisfaction rating for air cargo clients was 7.0 out of 10. While this was 0.4 below the figure in 2004, it remained above the 10-year average of 6.7. It should also be noted that, due to the small number of clients surveyed, these results were more prone to variation than other categories. According to the results, the things AQIS was doing well included having a better understanding of business needs,

increasing contact with clients and improving personal service and training. Nevertheless, the results indicated that shortages of staff when needed were contributing to deterioration in client satisfaction. The principal improvements that could be made, as suggested by air cargo clients, were increasing accessibility, increasing staffing levels and being more flexible and understanding of client issues.

Quarantine Approved Premises

The overall satisfaction rating for over 300 QAP clients surveyed reached 7.8 in 2006 – its highest level over the past seven years. Of those whose overall satisfaction improved, the most common reason was better communication with clients, better training and staff developing more personal client service relationships. Only 8% of respondents reported that their overall satisfaction had deteriorated, with inconsistent rule application given as the most common reason given. The most frequently reported suggestions for improvement were increasing the accessibility of staff, improving training and increasing specialist knowledge, increasing flexibility and increasing efficiency.

Shipping Agents

The average satisfaction rating for over 170 shipping agent clients surveyed fell slightly from 7.6 in 2004 to 7.5 in 2006. The three most common factors to which improvements were attributed were AQIS staff being more approachable and communicating better, increased contact and a more personalized service, and improved efficiency. Only 6% of respondents reported a deterioration, with the most common reason given as a shortage of staff when needed. The most commonly suggested methods to improve service included being more flexible and understanding, increasing efficiency and speeding up processing, improving value for money and increasing staff numbers.

✦ New Treatment Providers Page on AQIS Website

AQIS has developed a new page on its website to assist Australian importers, overseas exporters and service providers in identifying offshore treatment providers which are acceptable to AQIS. **Click here to access this new webpage.**

From this page, users can access a list of AQIS approved offshore treatment providers together with other relevant information for the following treatments:

- Ethylene Oxide (ETO) fumigation;
- Gamma Irradiation;
- Heat Treatment;
- Methyl Bromide fumigation;
- Phosphine fumigation; and
- Sulphuryl Fluoride fumigation.

AQIS encourages importers to check the site regularly as the status of treatment providers can change. The page is updated frequently, and details about the approval of other offshore treatments and treatment providers are added as they become available.

✦ e-Lodgement Accounts for Almost 40% of All New Permit Applications

The introduction of electronic import permit applications (e-Lodgement) has proved to be very popular with industry, with almost 40% of all applications received by AQIS now being submitted online.

e-Lodgement was developed under the Permit Application Tracking System (PATS) project and aimed to simplify the permit application and assessment process for AQIS and clients. The electronic lodgement option was introduced on 14 August 2006 to coincide with a number of other changes to the way AQIS processed import permits. This included the consolidation of most permit assessments (except those handled by National Coordination Centres (NCCs)) to the AQIS Canberra office, as well as centralised issuing and approval of all import permits by the Canberra office.

In the five weeks ending 5 October 2006, AQIS received 39.9% of all permits applications electronically (excluding live animal permits, which are not yet available online). Development of systems for the Electronic lodgement of live animal permit applications is continuing. A number of other potential additions to the system are also being developed, such as an automatic notification service to alert clients when permits are about to expire, as well as the ability to renew standard and non-standard permits online and the ability to pay for applications via the AQIS website.

✦ Online QAP Training Proves Popular with Industry

Online quarantine training has proved very popular for staff at Quarantine Approved Premises (QAPs), with over 5000 industry participants enrolling in the training package to date.

QAPs play an important role in Australia's quarantine risk management strategy and help to prevent the introduction of exotic pests and diseases to Australia. There are more than 2000 QAPs located across the country, handling a wide range of goods that pose potential quarantine risks.

In recognition of this risk, AQIS and the Industry Working Group on Quarantine (IWGO) developed and launched an online training and accreditation package in December 2005 to improve industry awareness about quarantine issues. The training applies to Class 2-9 QAPs, as well as Class 1.2 QAPs and Class 1.3 QAPs that handle High Volume Low Value (HVLV) goods. Since 28 April 2006, it has been compulsory for the handling of quarantine goods at these QAPs to be conducted (or directly supervised) by people who have successfully completed the training package. QAPs operating under a compliance agreement are exempt, and do not require staff that have completed the training.

Feedback from those who have completed the course has been positive, with most finding the training easy to follow and complete. Over 90% of those that have enrolled have successfully passed the course and have received their AQIS QAP Accredited Person status. The pass rate for each of the two units of the course is also very high – approximately 95% of participants pass each unit at the first attempt. This high initial pass rate indicates an admirable commitment to quarantine from industry members. This commitment is vital to the 'shared responsibility' for the protection of Australia's agricultural industries and unique natural environment.

Further information about QAP Accredited Person training is available from the AQIS website at www.aqis.gov.au/qapupdate.

✦ Summary of documents and alerts released by AQIS Cargo Management in September 2006

Reference Number	Document	Overview
1	<u>Notice to Industry 8, 2006-07</u>	Changes to the List of "Acceptable" Sri Lankan Treatment Providers for Methyl Bromide Fumigations
2	<u>Notice to Industry 9, 2006-07</u>	New Offshore Treatment Providers Webpage
3	<u>Notice to Industry 10, 2006-07</u>	Implementation of Giant African Snail (GAS) Targeted Inspections
4	<u>Public Quarantine Alert (POA) 0494</u>	Change in requirements for highly refined organic chemicals and substances

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

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✦ DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY ✦