

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October/November 2005

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: AQIS 01

Division/Agency: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Topic: Eucalyptus Rust

Hansard Page: 70

Senator Heffernan asked:

CHAIR—As a result of that, is there a restriction on other plants coming in from those countries?

Ms Ransom—Yes.

CHAIR—Please provide us with details of what they are.

Ms Ransom—I will have to ask AQIS for those.

Answer:

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service has general conditions that apply to non host plants coming from *Eucalyptus*/Guava rust countries. These non *Eucalyptus*/Guava rust host plants may have further restrictions placed on them if they are hosts of other pathogens or pests of quarantine concern.

Question: AQIS 02

Division/Agency: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Topic: Human Quarantine

Hansard Page: 77

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you confirm advice apparently provided to this passenger by the Minister that the AQIS officer – perhaps you will take this on notice – uses a Department of Health questionnaire.

Answer:

Yes. A copy of the questionnaire is **attached**.

[AQIS 02 attachment]

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Question: AQIS 03

Division/Agency: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Topic: Dog Handlers

Hansard Page: 79

Senator Heffernan asked:

Do you find that many dogs will only work with the one handler?

Answer:

In most cases Quarantine Detector Dogs work with a primary handler but are also required to work with other handlers.

Question: AQIS 04

Division/Agency: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Topic: Rotation Policy

Hansard Page: 79

Senator O'Brien asked:

How long has this policy been in place?

Answer:

A national policy on rotation of staff was promulgated in September 1999.

Question: AQIS 05

Division/Agency: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Topic: Training detector dogs

Hansard Page: 80

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you get me some information on how long it takes to train a detector dog and for a working dog and a handler to become proficient?

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Answer:

A 'dog only' training course takes approximately eight weeks. A 'dog and handler' course takes thirteen weeks to complete, including an initial five weeks with the dogs on their own and a further eight weeks paired with their initial handler. It takes up to twelve months for a team to become fully field proficient.

Question: AQIS 06

Division/Agency: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Topic: Importation of products via New Zealand.

Hansard Page: 85

Senator Heffernan asked:

In AQIS terms, is there any variation between what New Zealand lets in and what we let in? Someone told me there was a soft entry point through New Zealand for certain things. Is that possible?

Answer:

Australian quarantine requirements are independent of New Zealand's quarantine requirements and take into account the animal and plant health status of each country. Products imported into Australia from New Zealand need to meet the Australian quarantine requirements for the relevant raw ingredients, whether they are sourced from New Zealand or a third country. Depending upon the specific quarantine requirements for the commodity, government certification from New Zealand or the country of origin may be required to verify the country of origin.

After quarantine requirements are met, compliance with food standards is then assessed. Australia and New Zealand have a joint food standards system administered through Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

Under the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement, a range of products, including foods that are legally manufactured in or imported into either country can be legally sold in the other country.