

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 13

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division
Topic: AQIS/Biosecurity Cargo Staffing Numbers
Proof Hansard page: 20

Senator COLBECK asked:

Mr Chapman: In addition to that, activity in the cargo and shipping site has increased—that is with volumes of crates—

Dr O'Connell: Just volume.

Senator COLBECK: So what is the proportionate increase in volumes versus the proportion of increase in staff?

Mr Chapman: I would have to take that on notice, Senator, but overall there was not an increase in staff. There was a filling of vacant positions and I—

Senator COLBECK: It is an increase in staff because there was nobody there. Effectively what you are doing is you are transferring cost. It is no different to what happened in the other AQIS reforms. AQIS was employing—

Dr O'Connell: The government—with appropriation funding.

Answer:

In the 2009–10 financial year the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) Cargo Import Operations area employed 781 FTE, and processed 870 000 entries (280 000 sea and 590 000 air consignments). In 2011–12 783 FTE were employed in the Cargo Import Operations area, and processed 1 130 000 entries (310 000 sea and 820 000 air consignments).

Between 2009–10 and 2011–12 DAFF Cargo Import Operations increased its staffing by two FTE, and processed almost 30 per cent more entries.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 14

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division
Topic: Industry Working Group on Quarantine
Proof Hansard page: 22

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK: It does not seem to be clear from the letter that the Industry Working Group on Quarantine has written.

Ms Mellor: We have a letter also from the Industry Working Group on Quarantine, in response to correspondence about this, indicating that, as industry is already funding 75 per cent of the project expenses, it is assumed that additional costs related to the project will form part of that expense.

Senator COLBECK: What is the date of that?

Ms Mellor: This letter came in response to a letter from the chair of the industry consultative committee. This would have been in early 2012; this copy is not stamped, but we will get the actual date.

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry received the letter from the Chairperson of the Industry Working Group on Quarantine by email on 9 January 2012.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 17 & 18

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division
Topic: Industry Failing Food Importation - Hemp
Proof Hansard page: 31

Senator COLBECK asked:

CHAIR: If you are out there listening in the other room: we really are short of time today and it would be appreciated if the officers could make themselves available when they know their time is coming up. Although hemp snuck up on us, Senator Colbeck.

Ms Mellor: Do you have any more details, Senator Colbeck, of the time and place?

Senator COLBECK: I am trying to find out how you actually found the hemp in the grain that came in.

Ms Mellor: Perhaps we could take that one on notice, just to keep things moving.

CHAIR: Yes I think we might have to; hopefully, that can come back to us before the half-hour is up.

Ms Mellor: We will see what we can get.

Senator COLBECK: Prohibited plant: hemp, is what I have here, and I would assume that it is in grain form, found within another importation of grain.

Dr O'Connell: The minister was asking for the source of the information.

Senator COLBECK: It comes from DAFF Biosecurity: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Imported food program, Failing food reporting* from May 2012. So you are the source.

Senator Ludwig: Thanks

Dr O'Connell: We definitely have those for –

Mr Liehne: I will take that on notice and get back to you with details of the actual import.

Senator COLBECK: Have we taken any action around that particular –

Mr Liehne: Normally when there is a failing food of that sort the import stream – that is, the product, the exporter and the flow of product – is then bumped up to 100 per cent inspection until such time as the matter is resolved and we are confident that there is no ongoing problem.

Senator COLBECK: Did we check to see whether there had been any previous problems – not a lot of happy bread eaters, or whatever the grain was?

Mr Liehne: I would have to take that on notice.

Dr O'Connell: That is assuming that it was not rhetorical!

Answer:

The matter referred to by the Senator in the hearings relates to a consignment of breakfast cereal, not a grain consignment. The consignment in question was referred under the routine surveillance program and inspected to confirm compliance with Australian food standards.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 17 & 18 (continued)

The breakfast cereal product was imported in retail-ready packaging and had labelling identifying the presence of 'organic hemp protein' as an ingredient. Hemp is not permitted in food under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Standard 1.4.4 - Prohibited and Restricted Plants and Fungi and as a result, the food failed inspection.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has not identified any previous imports of this product.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 163

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Name Change

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

Ms Mellor indicated at Supplementary Estimates that the name change from DAFF Biosecurity to Border Compliance is “just a divisional name within the department. That is not a presentation”

When did the department decide on the new divisional name of Border Compliance?

Is Border Compliance the division previously known as AQIS?

What is the anticipated / actual cost of changing the name with our international trading partners?

In response to QON regarding the name change from AQIS to DAFF Biosecurity, the department advised they were “working through, in consultation with industry, a plan for completing the implementation of the name change in our export markets. This will ensure there is a complete understanding of the new name.”

How has the consultation with industry progressed?

Is there now a plan for completing the implementation of the name change?

If so, what is it?

If not, when will it be available?

What is the cost of implementing the name change with our international trading partners?

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 163 (Continued)

Answer:

1. The decision to change the name of the division to Border Compliance was made in June 2012
2. No. Border Compliance is the division formerly known as Quarantine Operations. It is responsible for:
 - the biosecurity clearance, of imported cargo, passengers, mail and international vessels;
 - compliance activities to provide assurance that biosecurity requirements are met. These activities include document evaluation, goods inspections, general surveillance and targeted campaigns;
 - management of third party arrangements such as Quarantine Approved Premises (QAPs) , compliance agreements and the Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS);
 - Imported food (transferred into the division from 1 July 2012)
 - The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS)
 - Investigations and Enforcement (transferred into the division from 1 July 2012).
3. None.
4. Please refer to Question 1 from Question on Notice 226 from Supplementary Budget Hearing – October 2012.
5. Yes.
6. A copy of the plan is at **Attachment No. 1**
7. No additional costs will be incurred as a result of the name change. Materials referring to AQIS will be updated as part of the normal refresh cycle. Trading partners will not need to incur costs in removing or replacing references to AQIS. Changes can be made as materials are due for their normal revision or replacement

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 163 (Continued)

Attachment No.1

Timeframe for International Rollout

July 2012	<p>1. On 10 July 2012 the Australian Government made a statement to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee that the Australian Government intends to retire the AQIS brand. This statement was the first step to ensuring trading partners are aware of the Australian Government's new DAFF identity and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - products exported to Australia will continue to be accepted if they meet Australia's import requirements; - there will be no change to the competent authority and that key contacts remain the same; - the Australian Government will make formal representations prior to making any physical changes to export certification documentation.
	<p>2. DAFF informed existing AQIS Authorised Officers and Veterinarians of the changes to their titles, identification cards and uniforms. These officers will now be known as 'Australian Government Authorised Officers/Veterinarians'.</p>
August 2012	<p>3. Audit of specific-market requirements for sample certificates to be completed, including the number of samples required for each market and the level of notice required by importing governments. Samples will be provided to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Middle East –Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey - Africa – South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Libya - European Union - Russia - China
	<p>4. DAFF to write to export industry stakeholders to communicate the changes to export-focussed industries. This will follow on from previous letters from the DAFF Secretary in December 2011 and March 2012 and will go to representatives of the meat, seafood, horticulture, grains, pet food, organics, dairy, ruminant genetics and live export industries.</p>
October 2012	<p>5. DAFF to prepare and provide comprehensive briefing material on the new identity to Australian Government posts. The briefing will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on the changes - Fact sheets – both in English and translated for the host country <p>Detailed handling notes will be provided for markets identified as particularly sensitive.</p>
	<p>6. A statement updating members on implementation of the new DAFF identity will be made by the Australian Government at the October meeting of the WTO SPS Committee.</p>

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

November 2012	<p>7. Australian Government to make formal representations to trading partners advising of the retirement of AQIS brand for all audit, inspection or certification functions. Official correspondence will convey the following messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The rationale for the change – the new identity captures the way in which Australia’s biosecurity system is changing to address pest and disease risks offshore, at the border and onshore rather than focussing on quarantine activities at the border.- The authority under which audit, inspection and certification activities are conducted will not change.- Reassure trading partners that key contacts will remain the same.- Communicate timeframes, noting the transition period during which they may continue to see ‘AQIS’ on certificates or in attestations. Note that new security paper featuring the words ‘Australian Government’ and the Commonwealth Coat-of-Arms will accompany health certificates from early 2013.- Explain that AQIS references in existing health certificates will not be changed unless certification conditions need to be renegotiated.- Any further questions or queries can be directed to the Australian Embassy in their capital.
	<p>8. All necessary changes to the DAFF website and relevant URLs to be completed. A formal notice will be displayed on the DAFF website.</p>
Jan 2013	<p>9. Samples of the new security paper will be distributed by posts to markets identified as sensitive to change. Authorities provided with samples will be notified of the date at which the new security paper will begin accompanying health certificates.</p>
	<p>10. Relevant industries to be advised that new security paper will be ready for distribution.</p>
Mar 2013	<p>11. New security paper to be provided to establishments to accompany all new export certificates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Noting that the visual changes to export certificates represent the most significant risk of trade disruption, DAFF will maintain an ongoing approach with markets identified as being most sensitive to the change.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 164

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: DAFF Cargo Consultative Committee

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

Why do you no longer provide data such as financial information, staff deployment and use of resources to the industry cargo consultative committee?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) does provide financial information to industry. Information on revenue and expenditure for the Import Clearance and Seaports programs is provided at DAFF Cargo Consultative Committee (DCCC) meetings and is made available on the DAFF website. Comprehensive financial information, including details about staffing levels, is provided to industry at fees and charges consultative meetings.

Prior to 31 December 2011, DAFF contracted the Customs Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia Inc. (CBFCA) to provide secretariat and liaison services to the AQIS/Industry Cargo Consultative Committee (AICCC). DAFF provided detailed financial and activity based information to the contractor pursuant to this consultancy agreement. The contract terminated on 31 December 2011.

The DCCC is still provided with financial information and activity data as appropriate and necessary for the operation of the committee.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 165

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Operation Hayride

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Was the document “Guidelines for Post Border Recovery Operations” created in its entirety post Operation Hayride?
2. What standard operating procedures were in place before this document?

Answer:

1. The Guidelines for Post Border Recovery Operations was created after Operation Hayride.
2. There were no standard operating procedures for operations such as Operation Hayride prior the creation of the Guidelines for Post Border Recovery Operations. Operation Hayride was the first post border recovery operation of this scope, and informed the development of the approach for the future.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 166

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Guidelines

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

How is performance of post border recovery operations against the “Guidelines for Post Border Recovery Operations” going to be monitored in future?

Answer:

The performance of post border recovery operations is monitored on a case by case basis. Governance mechanisms used to assess the management of post border recovery operations. include:

- A post incident review following each campaign to determine its effectiveness and areas for improvement.
- Participation in the preparation and review of each campaign by the Australian Customs & Border Protection Service.
- Oversight by the National Profiling and Cargo Targeting Committee.
- Internal Audit; and
- Commissioned reviews by the Interim Inspector General of Biosecurity.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 167

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Guidelines

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

What actions can be taken if permission to enter a premise is refused?

Answer:

Section 66AB of the *Quarantine Act 1908* provides that a Quarantine Officers may enter any premises approved for the purposes of a provision of the Act. Where consent to enter is refused and where sufficient evidence exists to convince a magistrate of the need to enter, a warrant can be obtained under section 66AC to authorise access. Where resistance is encountered the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is assisted by local law enforcement.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 168

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Guidelines

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

What training is provided in the “Guidelines for Post Border Recovery Operations”?

Answer:

Officers involved in the recovery of goods receive training in contemporaneous note taking, handling evidence, dealing with difficult clients. Commodity specific training by technical experts is provided prior to the commencement of each campaign.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry staff responsible for undertaking formal investigations and executing warrants are trained in accordance with Australian Government requirements set out in the *Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines* issued under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 169

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Guidelines

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

The Guidelines state that “post border recovery operations many not be suited to all DAFF Biosecurity officers”, and include training and experience and personal attributes officers need to complete the task. Is compliance with these requirements recorded before assigning staff to post border recovery operations?

1. How many staff are currently deemed to be suited to undertake post border recovery operations?
2. What happens to staff that are no longer required in appropriated programs and are not deemed suitable to undertake post border recovery operations?

Answer:

1. 58 operational staff have been used in recent post border recovery operations. The required skills and experience required for a recovery operation will often depend on the nature of the operation and the goods being recovered, so there will be other DAFF staff who could be deployed for future recovery operations. How many staff are required will depend on the scope of the operation. Post border recovery operations are run on an as needs basis and teams of appropriately skilled staff are created and deployed when required. Senior managers are responsible for selecting staff for recovery operations. Managers take into account a staff member’s current responsibilities and previous experience. Pre requisite training for targeted campaigns is recorded in the department’s resource management system (Aurion).
2. The movement of staff from an area funded by budget appropriation to a cost recovered area depends on operational requirements and is not in any way related to or dependent on post border recovery operations. When staff are moved into any new position the department ensures they have the necessary skills and training for their new position

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 170

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Operation Hayride

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. What improvements have been identified to reduce the large manual handling costs associated with recovering product through Operation Hayride?
2. Has consideration been given to requiring QAPs to maintain electronic distribution records or to have the responsibility and capacity to provide details of traceability within strict timeframes?

Answer:

1. Importers who are the subject of a targeted campaign are now responsible for the transport, storage, and treatment or destruction of goods found to be not compliant with biosecurity requirements. This also applies to the recall of their goods if they are ordered back into quarantine following distribution or sale. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry may also charge the importer for the supervision of recovery actions.
2. No.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 171

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Performance targeting and Effectiveness Program

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Is the \$2.5 million PTEP cost recovered or appropriated?
2. What consultation was undertaken with industry in determining the level of cost recovered funding needed to support the PTEP?

Answer:

1. The Performance Targeting and Effectiveness Program budget is cost recovered as an indirect operating cost for the clearance of imported cargo.
2. Consultation on fees and charges for import clearance takes place with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Cargo Consultative Committee (DCCC). Three DCCC meetings are held each calendar year. Targeted campaigns have been discussed during 2012 at DCCC (61) on 7 May 2012 and DCCC (62) on 29 August 2012.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 172

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: PTEP

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. How many operations are planned under this program and over what timeframe?
2. How is the decision made to identifying areas requiring further investigation and initiating an operation?

Answer:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is planning to conduct 5-6 targeted campaigns in 2012–13. This is in addition to other client verification activities, which include increased scrutiny of particular import pathways through cargo profiling.
2. Targeted campaigns are run by DAFF in response to suspected or identified risks. Targeted campaign activity in DAFF is overseen by the National Profiling and Targeting Committee which has representatives from operational, technical and policy areas as well as the Australian Customs & Border Protection Service. Targeted campaigns are developed through the identification of emerging risks derived from data analytics, cargo surveillance, Import Clearance Effectiveness (ICE) inspections, incident/intelligence reporting from operational staff, and the DAFF 'Redline' facility, and from the Investigations and Enforcement program.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 173

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Performance Targeting and Effectiveness Program

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

With the increased focus on cargo rather than airfreight inspections, has the Department assessed the resulting risk this poses for airfreight due to depletion of staff and due to making this change in focus public?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has reviewed the risk/interception data of air cargo for Unit Load Devices (air cans) and Reportable Documents. This review found that in the period from January 2010 to December 2011, only 0.04 per cent of air cans and 0.003 per cent of reportable documents failed inspection. The data supports the conclusion that these pathways are very low risk. In addition to targeted interventions conducted by the department, spot checks are conducted to determine that the assumptions that inform risk profiles remain valid.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 174

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division
Topic: Operations Abercorn and Balmain
Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. What is the budget for each of these operations?
2. Provide information on costs to date for Abercorn and Balmain, including staff expenditure.

Answer:

1. Operation Abercorn had an initial estimated budget of \$20 000 and Operation Balmain had an estimated budget of \$35 000. Both these estimated budgets excluded staffing costs.
The budgets were estimated because the actual cost of a campaign is affected by the amount of non-compliant or unlawfully imported product that is found. Higher detection levels increase the costs of investigation, storage and follow up seizure action.
2. The total cost of Operation Abercorn was \$42 811.83, with \$12 276 in staff costs and \$30 353.83 in non staffing costs. The non staffing costs included container transport, cargo deconsolidation, cold storage and analytical testing.

The total cost of Operation Balmain was \$58 443, with \$19 000 in staff costs and \$39 443 in non staffing costs. The non staffing costs included container transport, cargo deconsolidation, cold storage and destruction.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 177

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Movement of staff from airports to cargo

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Provide dates that each of the 97 staff were moved from airports to the cargo division.
2. Provide details of the total saving for the airport division resulting from this redeployment; including on costs, leave, long service leave provisions, mobile phone, vehicle and other allowances.
3. What data was used to show the growth of the cargo area that justified this redeployment?
4. What data was used to show the efficiency gains in the airport area that justified the reduction in staff.
5. Do the redeployed staff carry out similar roles with similar responsibilities to their previous positions?
6. Has there been any increase or decrease in salary packages for any of the 97 redeployed staff?
7. On what basis did the department decide that the high risk areas for quarantine was also the areas funded by industry?
8. Doesn't this highlight a potential conflict of interest for the department and a way of achieving the efficiency dividend imposed by the government?
9. Given the conflict of interest shouldn't an independent analysis be undertaken which areas are high risk and how movements of staff from appropriated to cost recovered is justified?
10. Why is the industry cargo consultative committee no longer provided with data relating to financial information, staff deployment and use of resources?

Answer:

1. A total 96.49 full-time-equivalent staff were transitioned from the airports and mail programs to import clearance programs. These staff transitioned as part of a business realignment process and through merit based selection processes.

The following table provides a breakdown by month and number of staff that transitioned from the airports and mail programs to import clearance programs. The number of actual staff moved totalled 128, as most staff were employed on a part-time basis.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 177 (continued)

Month	Staff moves
Feb 2011	2
July 2011	2
August 2011	2
September 2011	6
October 2011	10
November 2011	5
December 2011	18
January 2012	8
February 2012	24
March 2012	19
April 2012	8
May 2012	9
June 2012	1
July 2012	14

2. The 2011–12 financial year cost savings (at current remuneration levels) for the passengers and mail program totals \$3.137 million in salaries, and annual and long service leave.
3. Cargo rates have increased steadily each year. Between 2008–09 and 2011–12 the number of sea cargo consignments referred to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) increased by 14 per cent, whilst the number of air cargo consignments increased by 74 per cent. The staff were placed in existing vacancies that reflected increased requirements for inspection in air cargo, and for inspection activities targeting non-compliance and poor industry performance.
4. DAFF has identified a range of reform measures to better target risk and improve business processes at airports and mail gateways. Internal systems such as the intervention database, the financial system and activity based timing surveys were used to determine appropriate staffing levels.
5. Staff now engaged in the import clearance programs perform different roles. The level of responsibility is similar and is commensurate with their employment level,
6. The salary scales and employment conditions for DAFF officers in the airports, mail and import clearance programs are the same, and are set out in the DAFF Enterprise Agreement 2011–14. Individual officers' salary levels may vary depending on their employment level, length of service and the roles that they perform, e.g. shift versus non-shift positions.
7. The volume of cargo, nature of goods imported and the results of campaigns such as Hayride, which highlighted deliberate serious non-compliance by some importers, all contributed to DAFFs assessment of the relative risk posed by the cargo pathway.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 177 (continued)

In addition to the risk based considerations, a decision was also taken to fill existing vacancies in the import clearance programs using internal staff from the airports and mail programs. This was the most cost effective and efficient method by which to fill those vacancies.

8. There is no conflict of interest in the department's management of Australia's biosecurity staffing arrangements. In moving staff from the airports and mail programs to fill existing vacancies in the cargo program, the department applied cost effective and efficient processes to deliver appropriate biosecurity risk management in the cargo pathway.
9. There is no conflict of interest in the department's management of Australia's biosecurity staffing arrangements. There is a benefit to cost-recovered clients when vacancies are filled with capable and experienced staff who understand the business.
10. Refer to the answer to QoN 164 (Border Compliance) from the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing in October 2012.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 191

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division
Topic: Reform of Australia's biosecurity system
Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. What are the impediments to having commercial food safety audits recognised as part of an importer's food safety management system?
2. Has any risk assessment been undertaken to determine if these commercial audits outcomes could be recognised?
3. If not, why not?
4. If so, what were the significant risks?
5. Has a cost benefit assessment been undertaken to determine if recognising commercial audits could reduce costs for Biosecurity Australia?
6. If so, what were the results?

Answer:

1. No assessment has been undertaken to recognise commercial food safety audits of the importer and therefore, no impediments have been identified.
2. No.
- 3&4. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has been focusing on implementing the nine existing food import compliance agreements and on working with the industry to increase awareness of this alternative arrangement under the imported food inspection scheme.
4. Not applicable as no risk assessment has been undertaken.
- 5&6. No.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 192

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: Chinese food imports

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Biosecurity Australia determines the risk of imported foods through discussion with FSANZ. Are you aware of how FSANZ determine the risk of imported foods?
2. You have indicated that Country of origin is not generally considered by FSANZ in their risk assessment. How is that position justified? Could there not be underlying issues related to for example agricultural practices or environmental conditions that would warrant increased vigilance (I am thinking of water supply, training and application of agricultural chemicals....)

Answer:

1. Yes.
2. FSANZ has provided the following text relating to the second question:

“The basis for FSANZ’s scientific risk assessment advice (assessment policy) is set out in the Australia/New Zealand Risk List Criteria for food/hazard combinations which pose a high or medium risk to public health and safety. For emerging issues, the FSANZ advice has specified the country of origin where this is relevant eg. melamine in certain foods from China.”

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 233

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division

Topic: AQIS Redline

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator HEFFERNAN asked:

1. If there is a breach of quarantine, what is the best phone number for people to report such a breach?
2. Recently a constituent (former AQIS employee) reported a possible breach and called the AQIS Redline (1800803006) during a normal business day but received a recorded message, is it normal procedure to have a recorded message during business hours?
3. What hours are the lines manned? How many incoming calls do you receive per week/per annum, can I have the breakdown of incoming calls/reports for the last 2 years?
4. Are all reported breaches of quarantine followed up?
5. If not, how do you assess genuine calls?
6. With regard to the general inquiries phone number 1800020504, is this operated and manned 24 hours?
7. How many calls do you receive per week /per annum, can I have a breakdown of incoming calls for the past 2 years for both phone numbers (General & Redline)?

Answer:

1. The best phone number for people to report a breach of quarantine is the DAFF Biosecurity Redline 1800 803 006.
2. Redline calls are usually answered during business hours. Unanswered calls divert to a recorded message that allows callers to leave a message and reason for their call. Callers are advised they may alternatively contact the DAFF general enquiries line on 1800 020 504.
3. Redline is staffed during normal business hours (9am – 5pm). For the two year period of 01 July 2010 to 30 June 2012 there were 911 calls, 174 emails and 21 letters to Redline. A total of 1106 enquiries were received, averaging 11 per week.
4. Yes. All reported breaches of quarantine are followed up
5. Please refer to the answer to Question 4.
6. The general inquiries phone number 1800 020 504 is operated on a 24 hour basis. The phone is staffed from 8.00 to 16.00 and backed up by an automated answering machine.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 233 (continued)

7. The Redline received 911 calls in the period 01 July 2010 to 30 June 2012 (refer to Question 3).

The general enquiry line 1800 020 504 receives an average of 765 calls per week. Between November 2011 and October 2012, it received 39779 calls.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 297

Division/Agency: Border Compliance Division
Topic: Broader focus on importers and MRLs
Proof Hansard page: 32

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK: What does that mean for our broader focus on importers and MRLs? Does that go to build in the classification of high- versus low-risk product when you are seeing a number of these products coming through?

Mr Liehne: The system is a dynamic system, and that is that when we do find fault we target the source and the import that has a problem until such time as the problem is resolved. So it is a process which we apply regularly in a risk managed sense. So it is not a one-size-fits-all. We do have a profiling system which talks about which are the high-risk species and what the risks are for. We then manage that in a dynamic fashion.

Senator COLBECK: Okay. Thank you, Chair. Can you come back to me with what you can find out on the issues I raised?

Mr Liehne: Yes.

Answer:

Consignments of imported seafood products are initially referred for inspection at either the 'risk' rate of 100 per cent of consignments, or the surveillance rate of 5 per cent. The initial inspection rate is based on the product's potential to contain food safety hazards and the level of risk the hazards pose to public health and safety. This depends on the species of imported seafood, its level of processing (fresh, cooked, cured, canned) and whether the goods are wild-caught or farmed.

Tests applied to imported seafood currently include those for microorganisms (*Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Vibrio cholerae*, coagulase positive *Staphylococcus*, standard plate count), natural toxicants (histamine) and chemical contaminants (antibiotic residues in specific seafood for fluoroquinolones, malachite green and nitrofurans; and sulphur dioxide).

Currently the 'risk' category seafoods are tuna, mackerel, bivalve molluscs, ready to eat prawns and ready to eat processed finfish. All other seafood is surveillance category food. The presence of antimicrobial compounds in seafood is considered to constitute a low risk to human health and safety at this time.

When Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) undertakes a science based assessment of a food for hazards associated with that food, data is gathered from a wide range of sources, including test data from the imported food inspection scheme. FSANZ then provides the outcomes of this assessment to the department to inform inspection activities under the imported food inspection scheme.