

Profile Series: Border Interventions on Import Pathways

This series is intended to provide the kiwifruit industry with a greater understanding of how risks are managed at the border. It is important to remember that the border is just one layer of the biosecurity system, an over of the entire system is provided in the report “The NZ biosecurity system and how it operates” which can be found on the KVH website (www.kvh.org.nz/NZ_Biosecurity).

International Mail

How much mail does New Zealand receive?

Each year 40 to 50 million mail items are processed at New Zealand’s International Mail Centre, located near Auckland Airport. MPI’s biosecurity team use risk profiling, x-ray and detector dogs to screen and process incoming mail on this pathway and seize around 40,000 biosecurity risk items annually.

Mail is considered a low risk pathway for the entry of fruit fly host items and in the past 12 months only one fruit fly host item has been intercepted on this pathway. However, as a precautionary measure in response to this year’s Queensland Fruit Fly finds in Whangarei, MPI have increased detector dog presence to 100% coverage for all high risk mail items.

How are biosecurity risk goods detected?

Like other import pathways, biosecurity clearance for international mail is managed by ensuring that incoming goods comply with the relevant import health standards, where required.

Parcels and other articles being sent to New Zealand from overseas require a declaration sticker. This is issued by the corresponding postal service and usually contains the content’s description, weight and value. The declaration is used as a guideline by border staff, who will often inspect the mail to ensure the description is correct. No declaration is required for letters.



Incoming mail is then screened using the required declaration, x-rays and detector dogs to detect mail that may contain restricted goods. Mail that may contain risk goods e.g. food, souvenirs, equipment or seeds, will be opened and examined and may be detained at the border to ensure compliance with the relevant import health standards.

Items that do not comply with import health standards are generally destroyed by an inspector using an approved method. In instances where the item is considered to be of a significant value the owner may be contacted and provided the following options:

- (a) Re-ship goods (at owner's expense);
- (b) Treat goods (at owner's expense) as directed by the inspector; or
- (c) Destroy goods under the direction of the inspector, no compensation is given for destroyed goods.

All seized goods are to be held in a secure area until the direction of the inspector can be carried out or directed into an approved transitional facility. Risk goods shall be processed in the manner described in the appropriate import health standard.

Costs

The New Zealand government allocates funding for the clearance of mail and it is prohibited for MPI to recover these costs from other sources, such as those sending the mail. Any costs associated with re-shipment or treatment of non-compliant mail items are borne by the owner.