



# State of play

**There are high expectations that Biosecurity NZ will keep pests and diseases out of New Zealand as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Here's a rundown of some of the challenges at the border and how they are being addressed.**

## Travel explosion

The passenger pathway is opening faster than expected. New Zealanders are embracing the opportunity to travel, and overseas visitors are on the rise. There was more than a 1500% increase in passengers for August, compared with the same month last year (see border stats on page 13).

Our recruitment efforts and ongoing work to digitise the clearance process has put us in good stead to meet the increased demand.

As regular readers of **The Border Space** will be aware, we have a project team working with other border agencies on the introduction of a digital arrival card by April next year. Work is also progressing with developing algorithms to enable new baggage screening technology to automatically detect biosecurity threats. We are also working closely with international airports on changes to arrival areas to make best use of the new technology.

An unwanted development is the rising level of lost baggage, particularly from Australia. At its most extreme, we have seen passenger aircraft land without any baggage. The problem is essentially one of double handling. We have to clear passengers and their baggage separately.

## Cruise newbies

It's an exciting time for the cruise industry. The first cruise ship in nearly two years arrived in New Zealand on 12 August, carrying nearly 1200 passengers.

The start of the cruise season proper will be when the *Majestic Princess* pulls into Tauranga on 15 October.

We're very aware of the need to re-educate cruise lines and passengers on New Zealand's biosecurity rules, which include some of the toughest biofouling restrictions in the world.

Vessel operators should expect more gangway checks than in the past for at least the early part of the season.

To this end, we will be holding off accrediting any vessel under our Recognised Cruise Line Programme until closer to Christmas. Accredited vessels must demonstrate they meet strict biosecurity requirements with documented processes and auditing. This reduces the need for some gangway checks.

## Adapting to cargo risk

We have assessed 461 transitional facilities as posing the highest biosecurity threat to New Zealand. Together, they account for some 65% of imports.

Officers have been working closely with these facilities to ensure there are appropriate biosecurity controls in place, which are now assessed under our new performance-based verification approach ([see previous issue of The Border Space](#)).

The new verification approach is part of a wider move away from a one-size-fits-all way of ensuring imported cargo meets biosecurity requirements. Simply put, we have become a lot more adaptable than the past. Recently, this has seen us set up a number of one-off arrangements to move containers from ports as quickly as possible.

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We are aware of industry concerns about clearance holdups and are looking at ways to empower more biosecurity decisions by third parties. Employing more and more officers to undertake cargo checks is not a sustainable solution. It is great that industry is keen to take on greater responsibility.

## Parcel packing

There is an increasing number of containers arriving jam-packed with individual parcels that, in the past, would have been imported as separate express freight or mail items. We used to see one container of consolidated parcel freight a month. We're now seeing 10 or more. The trend poses biosecurity challenges. There is often little information about individual goods on the manifest. Officers have to check every parcel, which can take up to four days and often results in the detection of risk goods. We have made it a priority to design a new clearance approach to address these concerns (stay tuned!).



Food items from a consolidated parcel freight container



**31 October 2022 • Auckland**

The biosecurity landscape has changed much since our last biosecurity forum in 2018. This year's event in Auckland on 31 October provides an opportunity for anyone interested in biosecurity to discuss current issues and developments.

► **Further details, including the programme and how to register, are available on the Biosecurity NZ website.**