

# Biosecurity Policy

## Protecting New Zealand's primary industries

In the past five years 333 new organisms have been detected and validated as being present within New Zealand.

In 2007, Biosecurity NZ seized 157,467 biosecurity-risk items entering our borders. These figures do not include breaches that were dealt with informally. We need stronger border controls and a clear message sent: National will take our biosecurity laws seriously.

We must have pest management strategies in place and vigilant surveillance before incursions become permanent residents. Varroa and Didymo are clear examples of the damage caused, as valuable time is wasted deciding on a strategy that other biosecurity measures have failed to contain. Treasury estimates that the spread of Didymo will cost \$285 million. The cost of Varroa in the South Island is estimated to be more than \$300 million. Long term, the cost to our pastoral industries will be much higher.

## BORDERS

National believes that the \$200 instant fine is not enough for people who deliberately flout our biosecurity laws and put our health and economy at risk. In 2007, Biosecurity NZ issued 4,700 infringement notices to passengers arriving in New Zealand who did not declare biosecurity-risk items. Some 1,361 of those were New Zealanders and 3,308 were visitors.

Currently, Customs and MAF officials work separately at airports and other entry points. With the increase in air passengers, pressure has developed at our airports, and Auckland in particular. With a lack of room and the need to process passengers quickly, the quality control of searches is put under pressure. We need to investigate ways in which MAF and Customs can share facilities, equipment, and search facilities in a way

that maintains high standards and keeps processing times to acceptable levels.

### National will:

- Increase the instant fine up to \$1,000.
- Deport visitors who deliberately and seriously flout our biosecurity laws.
- Investigate synergy between Customs and MAF staff at airports and other entry points into New Zealand.

## IMPORT HEALTH STANDARDS

With increased trade and more imports, we must be careful that our Import Health Standards not only protect our own produce and environment but also have strong procedures which ensure those standards are applied. In May 2006 the Auditor-General's performance audit on the implementation of Import Health Standards for sea containers highlighted severe flaws with the current system.

It is imperative that New Zealand maintains a high standard of inspection for all containers and keeps abreast of new technology so we stop incursions at the border. The Painted Apple Moth and the Southern Salt Marsh mosquito are thought to have entered New Zealand via a container. Most of New Zealand's incursions happen via sea containers.

Vehicle inspections are still inadequate, and in 2006/07 Biosecurity NZ recorded 50,683 biosecurity-risk items from used vehicles/machinery.

We need to secure greater compliance, we need to update our risk profiling system, and we must ensure that information is shared between the Quarantine Service and Biosecurity NZ. We still import products that do not have



an Import Health Standard. Coco peat from Sri Lanka is an example of a product that did not have an Import Health Standard until 28 newly introduced weeds were discovered – despite this product having been recently reviewed.

National will:

- Ensure that container inspections are thorough and technology is updated, and that used vehicle imports are subject to stringent inspections.
- Enforce the Import Health Standards for sea containers and prosecute those who do not comply.
- Take rigorous steps to ensure that Import Health Standards for products entering New Zealand have met the required standard and that the recommendations in the Auditor-General's report 2006 are implemented.
- Ensure that products entering New Zealand without Import Health Standards are risk-free.

## PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

National will work with industries to ensure that strategies are agreed upon and in place before there is an incursion which poses a major threat to New Zealand. The Varroa Bee Mite, for example, was first discovered in April 2000, but the pest management strategy was not formalised until February 2005 – an unacceptable time delay. Industries that have suffered through biosecurity incursions are very much in favour of a pro-active approach. This predetermined strategy – which will be agreed with industry – will be called an Emergency Animal, Plant and Marine Disease Response Agreement. The agreement will be voluntary.

National will also increase the priority for surveillance in biosecurity so we can avoid the high cost, both financially and physically, of eradication and avoid the need for mass spraying programmes as

we saw with the Painted Apple Moth. Surveillance strategies must be stepped up so that incursions or new outbreaks are discovered and dealt with before they become a major problem.

National will also improve our emergency response capability. Painted Apple Moth, Varroa and Didymo are clear examples of the damage caused because valuable time was wasted while funding was sought from Cabinet. National will identify and prioritise biosecurity threats that need to receive immediate action and funding, without bureaucratic hold-ups.

National will:

- Ensure that pest management strategies are developed with input from industry before incursions take hold.
- Establish an Emergency Animal, Plant, Marine Disease Response Agreement to ensure rapid response to and the control and eradication or containment of certain animal diseases and marine incursions.
- Increase priority for surveillance, including more emphasis on marine biosecurity.
- Introduce a biosecurity emergency response capability to enable swift responses to major biosecurity threats without bureaucratic hold-ups.

## PARTNERSHIP CO-OPERATION AND REVIEW

Biosecurity relies on strong working partnerships with local government and industry. At the moment there is confusion between roles and a reluctance to work with Biosecurity NZ as the boundaries have become blurred.

National will introduce a framework to address shortcomings in the current approach to dealing with biosecurity incursions by bringing central government, local government, and industry together to

make decisions. Under the proposed framework, MAF would retain its leadership role in response and fund the investigation phase, and affected industries and MAF would make joint decisions about incursions management and resourcing, through a decision-making committee. During incursion responses, affected industries would work with MAF to manage the response and collaborate on operational matters.

National will also ensure the Crown meets its obligations as a landowner. Crown-owned land approaches half of the New Zealand land mass. For much of this land, especially the conservation estate, there are different pest-management issues, priorities, and management requirements. Pest threats and weeds do not recognise land ownership or boundaries. We need to have a unified approach to pest management for all land, be it private or Crown owned.

National will also review the Biosecurity Act. This will ensure that the Minister can put in place funding and strategies immediately. Legislation recently had to be rushed through the House because of High Court action over an Import Health Standard. The loophole in the Act was known some years before the court highlighted the problem.

National will:

- Build up biosecurity partnerships with integrated planning which promotes inter-agency coordination.
- Ensure Crown agencies meet their obligations as responsible landowners.
- Review the 1993 Biosecurity Act so that legislation reflects modern practice and enables funding and response times to be minimal.