



Plant Quarantine in Australia for Pome Fruit Budwood Importations

Access to new varieties from overseas is very important to the Australian industry. Pome fruit budwood imports are classified as high risk and as such can only be imported via the commonwealth quarantine stations or accredited state government stations. Improvements to the import protocols were completed in 2002 and the time spent in quarantine was reduced from three to four years to 15 to 18 months.

Reviews of quarantine are completed on a regular basis with the most recent being the Beale review of Biosecurity, which was completed during 2009. This review followed the Callinan inquiry into the Equine Influenza outbreak completed in 2008. The location and operation of quarantine stations by the commonwealth government was a key issue of both.

APFIP was able to provide direct input into the Beale review on behalf of the pome fruit industry. The issues that were raised are reflected in the recommendations from the report related to plant quarantine detailed below. The challenge is to get them acted upon.

Recommendations (*One Biosecurity, A Working Partnership.* [Beale, Fairbrother, Inglis & Trebeck 30 September 2008] page 171)

61 The Commonwealth should own and operate specialised quarantine facilities where monopoly rents might be charged if such facilities were operated privately.

62 The Commonwealth should immediately clarify its intentions with respect to the future ownership, management and operation of the quarantine facilities currently located at Eastern Creek and Knoxfield.

63 All quarantine stations that manage equivalent risks should have their performance accredited and audited to equivalent standards, irrespective of whether the quarantine station is privately or publicly owned and operated.

64 The effectiveness of the anti-smuggling subsidy for plant material should be reviewed, with other avenues explored for improving compliance with biosecurity requirements, including a review of smuggling penalties.

The futures of the two commonwealth plant quarantine stations (Eastern Creek NSW & Knoxfield VIC) have not yet be resolved by the Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service (AQIS). The leases for these stations expire in 2015 and 2011 respectively. AQIS is conducting a project related to the future of its quarantine stations. This is described by AQIS has a “two pass” process. The first pass required gaining approval from the government that the business case exists for the construction of new quarantine station/s. The second pass requires the development of the technical detail for the stations and cost estimates for construction. APFIP is actively participating in this process and providing advice and information that will best advantage the pome fruit industry. It’s anticipated that plans with costing will be completed by mid 2011.

Garry Langford
APFIP General Manager
garry@apfip.com.au (03) 6266 4344