



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine
and Inspection Service

Questions and Answers about quarantine risks during Diwali festival

Q	Why is AQIS interested in what people mail or bring into Australia?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International mail or people travelling to Australia could potentially introduce pests and diseases that are not found in Australia.• Items or gifts that contain prohibited food items such as spices, herbs, nuts, seeds, dairy products or plant material could introduce pests and diseases that could have devastating effects for Australia's import and export markets. Khapra beetle could hitch a ride with traditional Diwali gifts and Indian sweets containing dairy products could carry diseases.
Q	What items are quarantine officers interested in during the Diwali festival?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typical items seized from India consist of prohibited plant material, food items including spices, herbs, tea, nuts, seeds; or Indian sweets such as barfi, ras malai, gulab jamun, pedas; or any other food items containing dairy products. All of these could carry pests and diseases that are not found in Australia.• In the past year quarantine officers seized more than 900 Kilograms of items mailed from India.

Q	How do you detect prohibited items and what happens to seized items?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At mail centres, prohibited items are generally identified by x-ray, checked by detector dogs or inspected by quarantine officers. Mail recipients are notified of the removal or seizure of any items from their parcel. • At international airports your luggage may be x-rayed, checked by detector dogs or inspected by quarantine officers. If prohibited items are found, quarantine officers will ask permission to look inside to make sure they don't pose a quarantine risk. • Items that are declared and inspected, depending on the quarantine risk, may be released, treated then released, or destroyed. It is best to always declare items even if you are unsure.
Q	How do those mailing packages or travelling to Australia ensure they comply with Australian quarantine laws?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People expecting mail items from overseas should familiarise themselves with what cannot be sent to Australia. They need to advise their family and friends not to risk sending prohibited items and to correctly complete the declaration form, by accurately listing the contents of each parcel. • Before landing in Australia you will be given an Incoming Passenger Card. You must mark 'Yes' if you are carrying any plant material, animal products or food including spices, seeds, nuts or Indian sweets. This is a legal document and there may be penalties if you don't fill this in correctly. • Failing to declare quarantine risk items on your passenger card could result in an on-the-spot fine of up to A\$220. For more serious breaches you could be prosecuted and face a fine of up to A\$66 000 or 10 years in prison which may result in a criminal record.
Q	Where can people find more information about what can and can't be mailed or brought into Australia?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To find out what can and can't be mailed or brought into Australia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visit the AQIS web site www.aqis.gov.au. The website also has in-language information and fact sheets. ○ Request or download the quarantine brochure <i>What Can't be Mailed to Australia? Or the What can't I take into Australia?</i>. ○ Call AQIS on 1800 020 504 (free call in Australia and is in English) with any questions. ○ If you need help in another language contact the Translating and Interpreting Service 131 450 (within Australia)