

SAVAGE PRINCESS COMES TO TOWN (see page 8)

Number 1/2005 FEBRUARY 2005

## IN FLANDERS FIELDS



Members of a Harelbeke World War I re-enactment society, dressed in dinky-di Australian uniforms, present arms as the Last Post is played during the commemorative ceremony

A small part of Australia mingles with the soil of Flanders on the grave of an Australian Aboriginal World War I soldier, Private Rufus Gordon Rigney, after a commemorative ceremony in Belgium's Harelbeke New British Cemetery last December.

The ceremony was one of several tributes to Australian soldiers during a three-week tour of

France and Belgium by students, teachers and friends of the Mount Barker High School in South Australia.

AQIS South Australia/Northern Territory export facilitation officer Matthew Buck played a significant role in facilitating the mixing of soil from Australia and Flanders. Matthew organised the sterilisation of the soil (provided free of charge by Australian firm Commercial Fumigation) and made contact with Bill Turner, the Department's agriculture counsellor in Brussels who sorted out potential quarantine barriers in Europe.

The ceremony involved placing about a kilogram of soil from four different locations in the Ngarrindjeri traditional lands in South Australia on Private Rigney's grave. In Ngarrindjeri beliefs, these sites — Ninety Mile Beach on Youngusband Peninsula, the Coorong River banks at Long Point, the shores of Lake Alexandrina and the banks of the Murray — were created by their ancestral hero Ngrunderri during the Dreamtime.

Australia's Ambassador to Belgium, Peter Grey, the Mayor of Harelbeke and Bill Turner took part in the ceremony, at which a kilo of soil was also removed from the gravesite to be returned to Australia and

interred in the grave of Private Rigney's sister, creating a symbolic link between his home and people, and his final resting place.

The moving and powerful gesture was conceived by former Mount Barker High School student Donna Handke, but as Matthew discovered it wasn't simple to execute. Like Australia's own, European Union legislation prohibits the import of soil to prevent the possible transmission of plant diseases and pests. However, thanks to co-operation between the Australian Embassy in Brussels, AQIS, the European Commission, the Belgian Plant Protection Directorate and the French Bureau of Plant Health, exempting legislation was drafted in time to allow the sterilised soil (carried as hand luggage by teacher and trip co-ordinator Julie Reece) to enter the EU.

AQIS had established a protocol for the sterilisation of soil in 1988, as part of the Bicentennial Celebrations, and this was re-activated to allow the entry of the Flemish soil in December for sterilisation.

Perhaps the poppies in that small part of a Flanders field will bloom a little more beautifully next summer.

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Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

# AQIS HELPS AUSTRALIA'S TSUNAMI RESPONSE

Quarantine officers around Australia responded rapidly to the tsunami disaster that struck coastal areas around the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day 2004.

AQIS has played a small but important role in speeding the return to Australia of

survivors of the devastation and facilitating the return of the bodies of those Australians who died. AQIS officers regularly supervise the arrival of human remains and, tragically, gained considerable experience in dealing with the transport of

large numbers of deceased following the Bali bombings in 2002.

While we must remain vigilant to prevent material that could pose a disease threat from crossing our border, Quarantine officers will continue to ensure

there is minimal delay for those returning to Australia, including medical teams and others who are now assisting with the relief effort.

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**Meryl Stanton**  
Executive Director, AQIS

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## PROTECTING EXPORTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Australia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering the live animal trade between the two countries.

Australian Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister Warren Truss signed copies of the memorandum in Canberra in December in the presence of the UAE Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Abdul Razak Mohammed Hadi. UAE Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, His Excellency Saeed Bin Mohammed Al Raqabani, later signed the memorandum in Abu Dhabi.

The memorandum outlines procedures to be followed regarding the live animal trade with the UAE, including arrangements guaranteeing that the animals will be unloaded into a quarantine facility should inspectors suspect any problems with a particular shipment.

The UAE is an important market for Australian live sheep. During 2003 Australia exported more than 225,000 head valued

at \$15.6 million. That makes the UAE Australia's sixth biggest market.

Australia's live export success in the UAE depends on stringent quarantine controls to ensure consistently high quality livestock.

The memorandum is also linked with the Australian Government's commitment to improve the livestock export industry's animal health record, following the recommendations of last year's Keniry Report on live animal exports.

At the same time as the memorandum was signed, Australia and the UAE formalised a Quarantine Enhancement Project to improve the UAE's quarantine arrangements — particularly its diagnostic and technical capabilities — and its ability to assess the health of animal imports.

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## TIWI TIMBER HEADS TO CHINA

More than 14,000 eucalypt logs set sail for China from the Tiwi Islands north of Darwin late last year, in a historic first for the commercial partnership between the Tiwi Land Council and Pentarch Forest Products.

Pentarch is managing a sustainable forestry program on behalf of the Tiwi people, from Melville and Bathurst Islands, that has seen extensive logging of native forest and replanting with fast-growing plantation timber.

The first shipment, of 6498 cubic metres of *Eucalyptus tetradonta* and *E. miniata*, was the culmination of the cycle so important to the future economic well-being of this small indigenous community.

AQIS Darwin has been involved in the planning for this shipment for at least a year; part of an ongoing consultation process to expedite export from these remote islands with very basic infrastructure.

AQIS officer Alex James says: "Over a period of three weeks late last year, AQIS officers from Darwin made five visits to Melville Island to inspect the logs. A few inspections were required because some of the timber had been stored over the wet, making soil and termites a problem.

"Pentarch minimised soil and seed contamination by carefully selecting the logs. These were fumigated after an inspection detected live insects, though fumigation is also a requirement of the importing country."

AQIS staff monitored the fumigation of the logs and conducted post-fumigation inspections before certifying them for export to China and Indonesia.

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# MARINE POLLUTER FINED

In January 2003 an empty AQIS Quarantine Risk Material (QRM) yellow plastic bag was found washed ashore near Coff's Harbour, on the north coast of New South Wales. QRM bags are used aboard vessels to bond quarantine risk material such as food from foot and mouth disease risk countries.

AQIS's Seaports Program determined that the bag did not contain any risk material when it was washed ashore and worked with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) to provide evidence in relation to a prosecution under laws covering pollution at sea.

The Program was able to quickly identify where, when and to whom the bag was issued by tracing the uniquely numbered quarantine seal using AQIS's Vessel Monitoring System. This evidence was a vital part of AMSA's prosecution, which resulted late last year in a penalty of \$9750 for the illegal disposal of the bag.

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# BRISBANE'S SWEET BEE BUST

In a high-speed midnight sting, Quarantine officers swooped on a swarm of Asian honeybees intent on invading Australia. The hitch-hiking insects arrived at Brisbane's Fisherman Islands wharf hiding in a shipment of empty cargo containers returning to Australia from Papua New Guinea.

P&O workers spotted the bees while unloading containers and contacted AQIS officers, who drove to the wharf late on a Saturday night to contain the bees and to inspect the vessel and its cargo.

The bees' nest – the size of a soccer ball – was attached to the bottom of a container. The officers immediately covered and fumigated the nest, and hosed down all escapee insects with knockdown spray.

If the bees became established here, they could cause more than a billion dollars' worth of damage to crops that depend on native honeybees for pollination,



as well as devastating Australia's honey industry.

Brisbane entomologists inspected the bees later and found that some of them were carrying parasitic mites that could pose a very high risk to our local bees by reducing their ability to gather nectar and pollen.

AQIS encourages the co-operation of industry partners

such as the P&O Ports workers who reported finding the bees.

Sharing the responsibility for quarantine in this way has paid dividends on many occasions – and thanks to quick action by wharf workers and AQIS inspectors, Australia is safe from the latest insect invasion.

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# QUARANTINE'S A BREEZE FOR COROWA GLIDERS

International glider pilots from the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom spend their year chasing summer around the world, searching for the perfect weather conditions required for their multi-million dollar sport.

And they say that Corowa, in southwestern New South Wales, has the best summer thermals of any of the world's gliding locales.

The pilots begin arriving in Corowa in November and stay for the summer. So far this season 25 gliders have required inspection and clearance by AQIS. Senior Quarantine Officer

Ray Vassallo from AQIS's Wodonga office (see 'The Art of Being Ray', AQIS Bulletin, October-November 2004) inspects the gliders as they arrive in sealed containers, direct from a just-completed European season. With a minimum \$150,000 price tag per glider, it's an expensive hobby.

Ray pays particular attention to the wheels and landing gear when the gliders are unpacked at the Australian Soaring Centre in Corowa and at nearby Benalla.

He has been working with local soaring clubs for six years

now and as well as inspecting gliders, he has also become involved in the production of a video being developed to educate international pilots on quarantine requirements.

The Corowa Soaring Centre is hoping to stage a major international competition in coming years. They're hoping for close to 100 competitors. Lots more work, but Ray and AQIS will be up to the challenge of clearing so many craft.

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# YOUNG TRAVELLERS GET THE MESSAGE

They have a sense of adventure, they seek out new experiences and they live life to the full. They're also likely to purchase quarantine risk items while travelling overseas — all of which makes young Australian travellers an exciting challenge for the Quarantine Matters! campaign.

Planning a trip overseas, especially for first time travellers, is a serious business. Researching on the Internet, grilling friends and family and, particularly, scouring travel guides, are the most popular ways of going about it.

Research by AQIS's public relations campaign team reveals that young Aussie travellers listen to around two hours of radio every day and most of them use the Internet daily (even more during holiday periods). So for the six weeks leading up to Christmas, Quarantine ran a national radio promotion built around an online competition.

Capturing around three million listeners a week, hosts on radio shows such as Take 40 Australia, The Hot Hits and Planet Rock encouraged listeners to enter an online competition. Entrants played a quarantine-related game of skill for a chance to win a trip for two to Fiji.

In an attempt to reduce further the likelihood of young travellers bringing quarantine risk items back to Australia, AQIS has produced a series of eight destination-specific pocket guides with Australian travel publisher Lonely Planet.

While the guides feature quarantine information, they also include other Australian Government travel advice ranging from safety and health to endangered species warnings and Customs tips.

Covering Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, New Zealand, Bali, Vietnam, China and Fiji — *and back* — the guides are distributed directly to outbound travellers



by Quarantine airport staff and are available online at [www.travelbug.gov.au](http://www.travelbug.gov.au)

And we mustn't forget 'Crocodile Hunter' Steve Irwin, who has appeared in Quarantine Matters!

television advertisements that have resulted in the quarantine message being recalled by up to 90 per cent of viewers. Crikey!

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# WA MANGOES FOR EUROPE'S TABLES

Two years of work by Western Australia's Department of Agriculture and AQIS export facilitation officers have helped see sales of WA mangoes to Europe and the United Kingdom grow by 1200 per cent — and they look likely to grow even further through this summer's export season.

The WA mango industry is expanding rapidly, and further increases in production are expected over coming years.

It all began with the joint Commonwealth/State export project that got under way in 2003. Before then, the State's mangoes had only been exported via air freight, which may have meant premium prices in many markets but high transport costs necessarily restricted market development.

The pilot export project looked at improving post shipment handling facilities

and marketing. This was necessary because the fruit is transported at low temperatures under controlled atmospheric conditions and requires some conditioning on arrival.

Follow-up in-store promotions in Europe and the UK are likely to create a large export market for growers in the Kununurra and Ord regions of Western Australia and from Katherine

in the Northern Territory — and overseas consumers know that, thanks to AQIS, the fresh fruit they're buying is guaranteed to be free from pests and diseases.

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## THE CASE OF THE \$9000 FRUIT SALAD ...

Two Swedish tourists learned the hard way that if you break Australia's quarantine laws you will be caught. They received a Christmas present they weren't looking for when they were fined almost \$9000 for trying to smuggle a handful of fruit through Cairns International Airport.

The visitors pleaded guilty to importing prohibited goods and failing to declare quarantine risk items — three bananas, two mandarins, an apple and a pineapple — and were fined a total of \$8928.

Routine X-ray examination of their bags revealed the fruit. When the travellers were asked if they'd been unable to understand the Quarantine questions on their Incoming Passenger Cards they replied that they understood English well.

According to AQIS Cairns International Airport acting manager Kylie Burns, the fine sends a strong message to visitors that Australia means business when it comes to protecting our agricultural industries from exotic pests and diseases.

The recent detection of citrus canker in the Emerald district has brought home to Queenslanders just how vulnerable the State's agriculture industries are to exotic disease, and how much control and eradication programs cost industry and the community.

Cairns International Airport has 52 Quarantine officers, four X-ray machines and four detector dog teams.

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## ... AND THE \$4000 SALAMI

Not many people would be prepared to pay more than \$9000 a kilo for anything out of a deli, but that's exactly what a Swiss salami smuggler was fined in Perth Magistrates Court late in December.

The visiting student was fined \$4000 for failing to declare just over 400 grams of salami when he arrived in Australia in November.

The prohibited meat product — which could have carried diseases as deadly as foot and mouth — was detected during routine X-ray examination at Perth International Airport.

When he was asked why he'd hidden the salami and not declared it, he replied that he'd intended to eat it.

The foot and mouth outbreak in the United Kingdom in February 2001 brought home just how easily livelihoods can be devastated by exotic diseases, and with so many Australians travelling at this time of year, the severe penalty serves as a timely reminder to passengers that they must declare all items of quarantine concern.

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## GOING TO EXTREMES IN CANBERRA



The hot, harsh conditions of the world's southern deserts and the people who call them home are revealed in *Extremes: survival in the great deserts of the southern hemisphere*, which opened at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, in late December.

The exhibition is an archaeological adventure, following the Tropic of Capricorn through Australia, South America and Africa. It unravels 300,000 years of survival in places that, remarkably, are home to more than four million people.

The people's stories are told through 350 artefacts and objects — all of which had to be carefully checked by AQIS inspectors David Nordsvan and

**AQIS officers Robert Savage (left) and David Nordsvan inspect a sealion-skin raft used by hunters on Chile's Atacama Desert coast**

Robert Savage before they could be exhibited. They include a South American raft made of sealion skins, Kalahari pottery, a reed hut from the Namib and samples of soil, rock and plant material from Africa and South America.

The idea for *Extremes* emerged out of a conference that brought together for the first time archaeologists from the three continents. The exhibition will be on show at the National Museum until October 2005.

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# hit parade

**AQIS operations staff recorded the following amusing and occasionally alarming events over the past month . . .**

Perth Airport Quarantine Supervisor Peter Dodge proved late last year that occasionally the job produces an event so unexpected, interesting and unusual that it's almost worth writing a book about.

Peter was working on the red (items to declare) channel and a passenger, arriving on a flight from China, declared close to half a kilogram of mixed seeds. Peter questioned the passenger about the seeds and was told brusquely that the seeds were destined to be taken out of Australia.

This aroused Peter's curiosity and he began to delve further into the fate of the seeds. Where were they going? Who with? When would they be going? The passenger replied that he didn't know where he – and presumably the seeds – would be going, or for that matter when he would be going.

Peter decided further inspection of the passenger's baggage was warranted. To his surprise he found a tent with soil and chicken feathers on it, plastering tools . . . and bondage equipment! Perhaps the passenger intended to get plastered and be tied up in Australia longer than he thought.

At this point Peter informed Customs and began cleaning the tent. Customs contacted Immigration officers, who carried out a background check on the passenger.

On Peter's return with the now clean tent, he discovered the passenger had decided he didn't want the seeds any more and asked Peter to destroy them, which he did. Peter subsequently learned from Immigration that 'his' passenger had been taken to a detention centre to await deportation - he'd been living in Australia illegally since 2001.

**Linda Kosmer and detector dog Milo made a princely find at Melbourne Airport recently. They were patrolling the carousel when Milo picked up a scent and suddenly about-turned to locate a gentleman with more than the usual traveller's requirements in his luggage. Further investigation revealed the chap had in his possession a bag of 'royal jelly' - including dead bees - straight out of a beehive. Needless to say, Linda exercised her executive authority and removed the sovereign substance.**

During routine cargo screening at a Sydney bond store, Customs officers intercepted a 20 kilogram consignment that had been declared as soap. Problem is, the consignment contained only two kilos of soap . . . and 18 kilos of fresh fruit. Our inspectors seized the not so squeaky-clean parcel for destruction.

**As always, the leadup to Christmas kept AQIS international mail staff (and detector dogs) on their toes. Each year the piles of sacks of millions of mail items that come into Australia during the festive season seem to grow bigger. As well as the usual anticipated decorations, plant material and falsely declared quarantine risks – often dried meats like biltong - this year there was a plethora of 'natural' Christmas cards. For some reason everyone decided to decorate their card with seeds or leaves – serious quarantine risks.**

At Melbourne Airport, detector Dog Benson and Handler Chelsea Stout were obviously on the hop when they picked up a parcel of croaked animals accompanying a passenger from Cambodia. Benson alerted to a female passenger carrying three bags of frog meat, weighing a total of 3.1 kilograms. One of the bags contained dried frog's bodies with legs, the second contained frog bodies stuffed with herbs and spices, and the other bag contained frog meat . . . enticingly enriched with hundreds of wriggling maggots.

**Two passengers arriving at Brisbane Airport declared 'several boxes of food' that turned out to contain enough grub for a sizeable barbecue — more than four kilograms of Korean sausages made of pig intestines stuffed with noodles, carrots, yams, onions and garlic and an array of herbs and spices. The passengers weren't interested in re-exporting the sausages and opted to have the lot destroyed.**

Often our officers seem to have a sixth sense feeling that all is not right. So it was at Sydney Airport when Joesetta Gatford and detector dog Jackson decided they would keep probing a female passenger's luggage even after she had declared and showed them food she'd packed in her suitcase. For some unfathomable reason she'd failed to declare 120 pairs of dried deer testicles and several kilograms of cooked chicken, all concealed among clothes. A \$220 on-the-spot fine may sharpen her memory.

Not long afterwards, Jackson the wonder dog found five live plants concealed under a basket of plastic orchids belonging to a Vietnamese couple. The couple claimed that their travel agent had charged them \$US30 each to fill out their incoming passenger cards for them 'so they wouldn't have any problems' when they arrived. Further examination of their bags revealed several kilograms of pork sausages (no wonder Jackson was interested), dried beef and various seeds.

They were very lucky. With such a large amount of contraband they faced very large fines, but because they weren't responsible for filling out their own cards they escaped with a formal warning.

**Here's just a sample of the sort of illegal incoming material that Quarantine screening at Sydney Airport's mail handling unit uncovered in just one recent week: 90 grams of unidentified seed, 490 g onion seeds from Taiwan, 200 g sliced deer horn, 2.6 kilograms of traditional medicine, herbs and bark, 500 g birds' nest from Vietnam, 1.7 kg of fresh chestnuts, 500 g fresh ginseng root and 200 g sphagnum moss from Korea, 24 eggs, 620 g dried pork and 190 g chicken wings from China, 370 g fresh blueberries from Bosnia, 240 g dried figs contaminated with sprouting seeds, 400 g pet food from Japan, 790 g (rapidly decomposing) persimmon from India, 350 g fresh almonds from Canada and 20 kilos (!) of beet seed from Israel.**

While inspecting a female passenger's baggage at Melbourne Airport, Angus Moore noticed a suspicious image on the X-ray screen. The woman hadn't declared anything, but when Angus inspected her bag he found

hamster and iguana food and a hamster cage. Angus asked the passenger if she was carrying any live animals, to which she firmly replied 'No', so he seized the food and allowed the woman to leave.

However, a few minutes later a flight crew member spotted a live hamster in the baggage hall. AQIS caught the hamster and took it to our Livestock Office.

Not surprisingly, the female passenger with the mysteriously empty hamster cage received a visit from an AQIS Compliance officer. She admitted the itinerant hamster was hers and received a formal warning.

**A bit of bare-faced cheek from an aspiring smuggler: routine screening at Sydney's international mail centre nabbed a parcel of ostrich biltong (jerky) from South Africa. What our officers didn't expect was a message saying: 'Hope this got past the sniffer beagles'. It didn't.**

Another parcel, this time from Canada, was full of flower heads containing seeds, assorted beans, leaves and pods . . . and a note saying: 'If you're reading this then this package got through Customs'. That one didn't either. AQIS duly sent both addressees warning letters reminding them to remind their friends overseas to comply with AQIS requirements.

**One highlight from a busy week at Perth Airport serves as a reminder that bad behaviour will never win the day. An AQIS officer inspecting a Swiss backpacker's luggage found she was carrying undeclared fruit. When reminded that this was an offence, that she had been warned before and on arrival, and that she would have to pay an on-the-spot fine, the backpacker's already poor attitude worsened and she refused to pay. Unruffled, the officer repeated the demand. Seeing the attitude wasn't working, the passenger proposed sending the money from Switzerland when she got home, claiming not to have any money on her. Still unruffled, the AQIS officer decided to up the ante and summoned Immigration officers, who made the passenger a compelling counter-offer: pay the fine or be deported at your own cost. Suddenly the passenger 'found' enough money to pay her fine.**

Also at Perth Airport, detector dog Deakin alerted to a female passenger standing at the baggage services counter. Unusually, he didn't respond to the cabin bags gathered at her feet, but to her head! It turned out she had pinned a flower to her sweater but had later removed the sweater and draped it around her neck, inadvertently concealing the flower. AQIS officers displayed sympathetic understanding when she explained she was feeling a little forgetful, what with her baggage having gone missing. The woman willingly surrendered the flower for disposal.

## CODEX

Public information about Codex meetings, agenda and standards and related texts included in the Codex Alimentarius is available on the internet. The web address for Codex Australia is [www.codexaustralia.gov.au](http://www.codexaustralia.gov.au) <http://www.codexaustralia.gov.au>

**For further information:**  
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## SPS

The World Trade Organisation's Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures provides a regular forum for consultation and for the implementation of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement, in particular international harmonisation of SPS measures.

**For copies of the documents listing Notifications phone 02 6272 4146**

## International plant protection convention

Information of IPPC International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, meetings, the work program and related issues can be found at <http://www.ippc.int>

## REDLINE

**If you believe someone you know has broken Australia's quarantine, meat or food inspection laws, we want to hear from you!**

**AQIS's Compliance staff need your help to identify and prosecute people who are breaking our quarantine and inspection laws. We value contributions from concerned citizens — because everyone has a part to play in helping AQIS protect our primary industries, environment and way of life.**

**CALL 1800 803 006**

**or write to: AQIS Redline  
GPO Box 858  
Canberra ACT 2601**

# FOCUS ON ... SAVAGE PRINCESS



When the recently commissioned cruise liner MV Sapphire Princess arrived in Sydney just before Christmas, she was distinctive for more than just her size and luxury accommodation.

She was also home to the 'Savage Garden' project, a unique on-board botanical collection featuring more than 600 plants from the United States, the Netherlands and Tahiti. And not only were the plants exotic: the vessel had called in to ports in Mexico, Hawaii, French Polynesia, Fiji and New Zealand, all of which offered opportunities for exotic insects to stow away.

Quarantine entomologist Adam Broadley and plant pathologist Kevin Davis were among the first officials to board the craft. They met the ship's own florist and determined that all plants were housed safely under cover . . . and then began checking for hitch-hikers.

The plants were in good health, but Adam did find scattered specimens of exotic aphids, lace bug, thrips, scale insects and a few stowaway ants. All were collected and the plants were sprayed with insecticide to ensure that while they provide pleasure for the Princess's passengers, they don't carry any unwanted passengers of their own.

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	ANIMAL QUARANTINE	PLANT QUARANTINE	EXPORT INSPECTION Meat/dairy/fish	EXPORT INSPECTION Fruit/veg/grains	IMPORTED FOOD INSPECTION
NSW	(02) 8334 7436	(02) 8334 7422	(02) 8838 3103	(02) 8334 7447	(02) 8334 7475
VIC	(03) 8318 6969	(03) 8318 6977	(03) 8318 6751	(03) 8318 6953	(03) 8318 6902
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