



Notice to Industry

27/2008-09

AQIS Biological Import Permit Approvals – update on delays in processing

Further to Notice to Industry 8/2008-09, the current delays in processing of import permits for biological products by AQIS are in the vicinity of 20 working days and can be attributed to a number of factors impacting on AQIS's capacity to quickly process import permit applications. This includes staff resource constraints, greater scrutiny of new and renewal applications for permit due to more stringent review procedures, and an increased need to refer some applications to Biosecurity Australia (BA) for scientific advice.

To avoid applicants from being caught short by increased processing times, AQIS recommends that applications and re-applications for import permits are submitted well in advance of the date the permit is required for imports or the expiry date.

What can you do to ensure the quickest assessment possible?

- ***Ensure all the information required for assessment is provided when submitting the application***

The evaluation of some import permit applications can be complex as many quarantine measures may need to be taken into account. Often AQIS requires applicants to supply further information during the assessment process. This can significantly delay the assessment process.

To ensure you have provided as much information as possible with your application, be sure to check the basic information required for your product through AQIS's Biolcheck website at www.daff.gov.au/aqis/import/biological/checklist.

The Biolcheck web page provides a description of information that needs to be supplied with import permit applications for a wide range of biological products including: animal feeds, therapeutic products, fertilisers, bioremediation agents, laboratory and culture media and food products.

Many processing treatment requirements are also listed and these should be carefully noted. If your products cannot meet these requirements your application may be rejected or, if a case for equivalence can be established, may need to be referred to BA for review.

AQIS is working to establish more thorough checklists and guidelines for import permit applications. However in the interim, the Biolcheck website provides very useful advice that will assist you in developing applications that include all required information.

Note also that general information regarding import conditions for virtually all relevant biological materials can be found on the ICON website at www.aqis.gov.au/ICON.

- ***Read your new import permit carefully***

While you may have held import permits for a number of years, import conditions for different commodities can and do change. While changes in import conditions will often be communicated to applicants during the assessment process, it is in your commercial interest to

read the import conditions on each permit issued to you to ensure you are aware of any changes. Do not assume that the import conditions remain the same as on previous import permits. Goods may be held, and need to be re-exported or destroyed, if import conditions have changed and you present inadequate documentation to clear your goods.

- ***Use the proper application form***

The application form for import permits has been updated over recent months and can be found at www.daff.gov.au/aqis/import/biological/products-foodstuffs/permit.

Be sure you are using this updated form.

The new form has updated information including the facility for permits to be emailed to you. You can also request an alert sent to you 3 months in advance of your permit expiring. A new application form for varying an import permit will also shortly be available from this site.

- ***Email your requests to AQIS for updates on your application***

Rather than phoning AQIS, e-mail your request for an update on the progress of your application.

The Biological Imports helpline is 02 6272 4578 and operates between 9-11AM and 2-4PM weekdays. It provides valuable information on import conditions and technical advice on import matters. However, the helpline is extremely busy and wait times can be long.

If you are seeking a status update on the progress of your application you should request this by e-mail. For biological products e-mail bioadmin@aqis.gov.au and for plant programs e-mail plantquar@aqis.gov.au.

AQIS is working to increase resources in permit issuing areas to better service client needs and reduce turnaround times. However, this will take some time to implement.

By following the steps above your application will be easier to assess and minimise the time AQIS requires to issue your permit.