

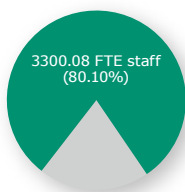
Tom Aldred



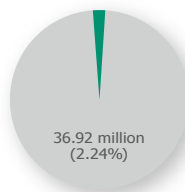
Rob Delane



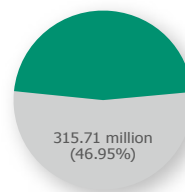
## Managing pest and disease risk 1.4



People



Administered funds



Departmental funds

**Output 1.4 contributed to the department's outcome by managing the risk of entry into Australia of exotic pests and diseases. This included maintaining appropriate quarantine controls at our border and managing the impact of pest and disease incursions through effective post-border control arrangements.**

**This work was done by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division in cooperation with Biosecurity Australia.**

### Highlights

- Declared Australia's freedom from equine influenza to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) on 25 December 2008, and made good progress on implementing the recommendations of the Callinan inquiry into equine influenza.
- Received favourable assessment from US health authorities on Australia's risk reduction measures for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).
- Worked closely with health authorities on animal diseases that can affect human health and trade, including hendra virus, rabies, and pandemic (H1N1) influenza 2009.
- Successfully cleared 19 000 passengers per day through Sydney Airport in the lead-up to World Youth Day celebrations.
- Worked with the implementation committee to progress the National Fruit Fly Strategy implementation plan and deliver priority projects.
- Declared eradication of citrus canker in Emerald on 23 January 2009, and successfully completed the khapra beetle eradication program in Western Australia and Queensland.
- Launched the Avian Influenza Toolkit website, a comprehensive information resource for this emergency animal disease.
- Received the Victorian and national nursery industry Supplier of the Year award for the AQIS Post Entry Plant Quarantine Facility at Knoxfield.

## National animal and plant health and animal welfare policy

### Strengthening Australia's disease management and animal welfare frameworks

Australia's preparedness to respond to outbreaks of emergency animal diseases and pests was enhanced during 2008–09 through substantial revision of the disease chapters of the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN) to keep them in line with developments in animal welfare, vaccination, management and diagnostics. We also continued to revise the Australian Aquatic Veterinary Emergency Plan (AQUAVETPLAN) manuals, including publishing a new manual on infectious salmon anaemia.

The department continued to oversee the implementation of Australia's National Strategic Plan for Aquatic Animal Health. Our other aquatic animal health work included:

- contributing to the development of a national abalone health workplan
- reaching agreement with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation on an approach to funding and implementing improved education and training opportunities for aquatic animal health specialists
- continuing to progress an aquatic animal health proposal for the Australian Biosecurity Intelligence Network
- supporting a national round of proficiency testing for aquatic animal disease diagnostic laboratories.

The department worked closely with state and territory governments, peak livestock industries, private laboratories and veterinary schools to improve Australia's laboratory preparedness for, and response to, emergency animal diseases. This was done through:

- the Animal Health Committee
- the Subcommittee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards

- the National Animal Health Laboratory Strategy
- the Australian Animal Health Laboratory Strategic Policy Group.

The department strengthened the Animal Health Laboratories Program and developed the Laboratory Emergency Animal Disease Diagnosis and Response initiative, in response to lessons learned from the equine influenza outbreak in 2007, and in line with our commitment to building a strong national animal health laboratory network.

### Consultations with government and non-government stakeholders

The department consulted with animal welfare groups and Jewish and Islamic stakeholders during a review of Australia's processes for the ritual slaughter of animals for human consumption. The outcome of the consultations informed the development of recommendations by the Animal Health Committee in November 2008 about ritual slaughter of animals for human consumption.

The department continued to work with stakeholders through the Plant Health Committee and its subcommittees—the Domestic Quarantine and Market Access Working Group, Surveillance Reference Group and Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostic Standards—to maintain a national focus for plant health in Australia, including development of a National Plant Health Strategy. These committees have developed new national management policies to deal with market access issues caused by climatic effects on pest distribution and changes in chemical registrations. These include a nationally endorsed policy for the use of irradiation as a phytosanitary measure, and modelling to assist in establishing systems approaches for managing pests in traded plants and plant products. The department contributed to the first National Plant Health Status report, which was coordinated by Plant Health Australia for its industry and government members.

The department continued to work with the aquatic animal health industry and associated stakeholders. We managed the transition of responsibility for the management of aquatic animal health from the national Aquatic Animal Health Committee to the Animal Health Committee and implemented strategies to improve the national management of aquatic animal health, including emergency animal disease responses.

We worked closely with agricultural and human health authorities and scientific groups to contain and control hendra virus incidents in Queensland in 2008. We coordinated Australia's animal health response during the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza outbreak to help protect domestic and export markets for the Australian meat industry.

The department continued to liaise with human health authorities on managing diseases affecting both people and animals, through membership of the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia and working closely with scientists at the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA). We also provided staff to DoHA's National Incident Room to assist in the human health response to pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza.

The department established a National Avian Influenza Surveillance Taskforce and a Poultry Biosecurity Consultative Group, comprising representatives from all poultry industry sectors, federal and state governments and Animal Health Australia, to progress national arrangements for avian influenza surveillance. The group developed the *National farm biosecurity manual for poultry production*, which was launched in June 2009 at the third annual Government–Industry Avian Influenza Forum. The manual outlines a minimum set of biosecurity standards applicable to all poultry sectors.

### Implementing the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy

An external review of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy undertaken by a consultant, Mr Bruce Gemmill, observed that significant progress had been made on implementing the strategy. In May 2009 the Primary Industries Ministerial Council endorsed the new Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines—Land Transport of Livestock.

Through the EU–Australia Cooperation Forum on Animal Welfare, the department worked with the European Commission and EU countries on exchanges of technical information, research and training. Work also continued with the OIE on the development of international animal welfare guidelines, including a Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for Asia, the Far East and Oceania. The joint OIE Collaborating Centre on Animal Welfare Research and Bioethical Analysis in Australia and New Zealand will assist the global effort to improve capacity building in animal welfare research and enhance both countries' standing as global leaders in that area.

### Implementing the National Livestock Identification Scheme

In 2008–09 we initiated the development of the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) (Alpaca). Our other NLIS work included:

- finalising and implementing the NLIS (Pork) project
- conducting exercises to test pig traceability
- developing business rules for the introduction of mandatory mob-based movement recording for NLIS (Sheep and Goats).

All Australian governments moved to harmonise arrangements for NLIS to improve national consistency.

## Wild birds tested in fight against avian influenza

Thousands of wild birds are being monitored and tested throughout Australia every year as part of the department's comprehensive program to prevent the entry or spread of avian influenza in Australia.

Since 2005, more than 35 000 birds have been tested under the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Targeted Surveillance Program, which gathers information on avian influenza subtypes found in wild birds in Australia and seeks to establish how the viruses circulate.

In the first seven months of 2008–09 alone, 5655 birds were tested.

The surveillance program provides early warning of possible avian influenza (H5N1 and other subtypes) being introduced into Australia by migrating birds from other countries and also identifies potential risk areas.

The data collected help scientists to plan how best to stop potential virus spread and to develop risk management strategies for the commercial poultry industry.

The department works closely with all states and territories and with partner universities to ensure Australia-wide surveillance.

Field activities include monitoring wild bird populations for disease by either capturing birds and taking blood or swab samples or taking environmental swabs (of faeces). Samples are then sent to state or university laboratories for testing. The department prepares quarterly reports to industry based on the laboratory testing results.

Some banding of birds is also undertaken to trace migration routes using satellite-based tracking systems.

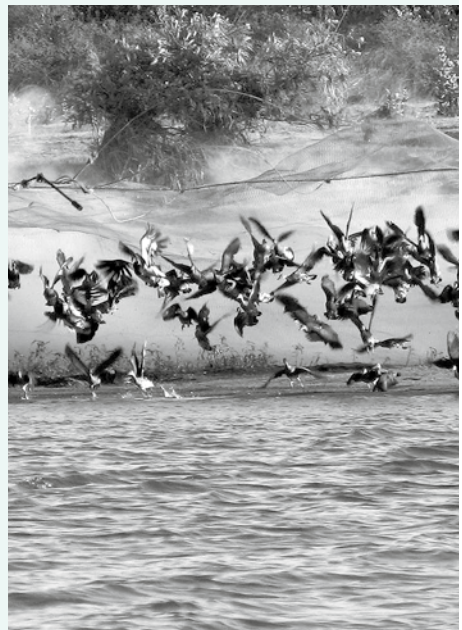
According to Andy Carroll, Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer, no highly pathogenic avian influenza strains have been identified in Australia under the program.

'However, the testing has uncovered evidence of wild bird exposure to most avian influenza virus subtypes', he said. 'This is to be expected and is common in wild birds the world over.'

'These findings reinforce the need to remain vigilant with on-farm biosecurity measures to limit the risk of a commercial poultry population becoming infected with avian influenza viruses found in wild birds.'

'Low pathogenic strains of avian influenza found in wild birds, if introduced to commercial poultry operations with a high density population of birds, have the potential to mutate into a more serious strain of disease.'

'This could cause high mortality in birds and pose a potential threat to human health.'



Netting wild birds in northern Queensland for testing (photo: DAFF)

### Managing national animal and plant health programs

The department chaired and coordinated the National Avian Influenza Vaccine Expert Group and the Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccination Expert Advisory Group. These groups continued to develop procedures for the management and use of vaccines during an outbreak of avian influenza or foot-and-mouth disease in Australia. AQIS issued permits to import four avian influenza vaccines, and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority is progressing assessments for their registration for emergency use.

The national wild bird surveillance component of the department's Avian Influenza Program continues to provide valuable information on avian influenza virus subtypes circulating in Australian wild birds. Activities include monitoring wild bird populations, investigating dead wild birds and sampling migratory birds. In 2008–09, we conducted wild bird surveillance for signs of avian influenza in northern Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. No highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus has been detected.

The department commissioned research in 2008 to examine biosecurity risks associated with live bird sales in Australia. The report was finalised in January 2009. The results of the study suggest that these sales pose a low biosecurity risk to commercial producers. Live bird markets of the kind that operate overseas do not exist in Australia.

The department is represented on the National Fruit Fly Strategy Implementation Committee, which is developing an implementation plan and an investment plan for consideration by industry and government. The Quarantine Research and Preparedness Plan is providing funding to implement priority elements of the strategy, including collation of a vast library of fruit fly knowledge, completion of four

contingency plans, consolidated diagnostic protocols and harmonised trading conditions for fruit fly host produce.

The department has provided significant input into and leadership of the development of the Australian Biosecurity Intelligence Network and its proof of concept projects, including in areas of wildlife health, networking of veterinary pathology laboratories and capturing and sharing of information on aquatic animal diseases.

### Enhancing Australia's early warning systems and preparedness

The Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer hosted the Australasian Joint Agencies Scanning Network in March 2009. The network is a multi-agency approach to environmental scanning, gathering and analysis of information about external influences to identify significant emerging issues before they become critical. The focus is on environmental issues, but the areas of interest extend to technology, skills and innovation, and the 'one health' concept that considers animal, human and environmental health to be inextricably linked. Reports by the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer identify emerging issues of concern and provide an opportunity for DAFF to be in a better position to deal with animal health threats before they become critical.

The Australian Wildlife Health Network, which received core funding from DAFF, collaborated with stakeholders to coordinate wildlife health surveillance information across Australia in a national database. A major activity during the year was coordination of the wild bird avian influenza program, culminating in the publication of a report on the first years of the project in the *Australian Veterinary Journal*. The Australian Wildlife Health Network (see [www.wildlifehealth.org.au](http://www.wildlifehealth.org.au)) coordinates a network of over 700 wildlife health professionals and members of the public with an interest in wildlife health.

Under the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, we conducted surveys for pests and diseases in northern Australia, working closely with Indigenous communities to raise awareness of quarantine issues. This resulted in the detection of several exotic insect and plant pests, which were reported to the Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer (part of the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division) for further action under national emergency response arrangements.

A national surveillance program managed by the Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer for fruit flies, Asian gypsy moth and a range of other plant pests of concern provides early plant pest detection capability in the rest of Australia.

### **Reforming chemical legislation and national risk management framework**

We continued to streamline the agricultural and veterinary chemicals risk management framework. Regulations were changed to remove the requirement for blue marker dye in veterinary antibiotic products for intramammary use. We worked with DoHA on developing new regulations for the control of security-sensitive biological agents.

### **Management of pest, disease and contaminant emergencies**

#### **Ensuring effective national management of emergencies**

In 2008–09 we participated in the ongoing development of nationally agreed standard operating procedures for use by biosecurity agencies in responding to incidents and emergencies.

We contributed to the activities of the national biosecurity Rapid Response Team and developed nationally agreed mapping symbology for use during biosecurity incidents. We maintained a national exercise management web portal to facilitate the dissemination of information and resources,

and conducted exercise management courses for government agencies.

DAFF led the Primary Industries National Communications Network, whose members meet twice yearly. Staff of the department also attended the Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Working Group meeting in Adelaide in March 2009. The working group is progressing the development of consistent emergency preparedness strategies, operating principles and training across all biosecurity sectors.

The department produced and distributed a series of brochures and posters to promote biosecurity awareness among small rural landholders, plant producers and travelling farm workers. We also produced vodcasts, CDs and DVDs. All this material is available from [www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity](http://www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity).

Department staff participated in several emergency response exercises during 2008–09. These included:

- ‘Exercise Bedrock’, which gave senior staff experience in applying the DAFF Critical Incident Response Plan
- ‘Exercise Charlotte’, a joint initiative with Australia Pork Limited and Primary Industries Resources South Australia, which tested a range of these organisations’ plans and elements of crisis management tools such as AUSVETPLAN
- ‘Exercise Sustain’, conducted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which tested high-level governance arrangements to be implemented in the event of a human pandemic
- ‘Exercise Wild Boar’, conducted by the Northern Territory Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources, which tested the response to a widespread outbreak of classic swine fever in domestic and feral pigs
- ‘Exercise Pollination’, conducted by Plant Health Australia, which tested the response to an incursion of honey bees infested with Varroa mites into the Adelaide region.

The department's work on emergency animal diseases also included:

- the national technical response for the detection of an exotic strain of infectious hypodermal and haematopoietic necrosis virus in Australian farmed prawns
- negotiations with industry and government on the ongoing problem of abalone viral ganglioneuritis in wild abalone
- contributions to the work of the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Freedom Assurance Program, which implements Australia's risk reduction measures for scrapie, BSE and similar animal diseases—including managing technical submissions to US authorities that resulted in a favourable assessment of Australia's BSE risk reduction measures
- workshops on plant pest contingency plans for technical specialists and industry representatives
- advice to three state biosecurity agencies undertaking locust control
- establishment of new national standards for locust management safety and efficiency and to minimise off-target impacts of locust chemical control agents.

In response to the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza outbreak, the AQIS Airports Program successfully implemented enhanced border measures, including the deployment of thermal scanners at all major airports.

Australia's plant pest emergency response arrangements through the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed were well practised in 2008–09. The Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests responded to 34 new organisms. Of these, one was considered transient (a single detection, with no others identified by follow-up surveys) and others were considered not technically feasible to eradicate—usually because they were too well established at the time of detection for an eradication response to be successful or cost-effective.

Eleven organisms did not meet the emergency plant pest criteria after analysis by the committee.

Reports on 16 plant pests were posted on the International Phytosanitary Portal ([www.ippc.int](http://www.ippc.int)) in line with Australia's reporting obligations under the International Plant Protection Convention.

To enhance Australia's capacity to respond quickly to a pest incursion, national contingency plans were finalised for four groups of exotic fruit flies, as well as for the devastating citrus greening disease and its insect vector. The development of more than 40 diagnostic protocols for the highest priority emergency plant pests was progressed with a view to ensuring rapid and accurate diagnosis of these pests should they occur in Australia.

### **Refining the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed**

Australia's preparedness to respond to outbreaks of plant pests was enhanced during 2008–09 through amendments to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed hosted by Plant Health Australia Limited. The amendments allow members to make decisions more efficiently to determine the response to plant pest incursions and new host records—of which there are, on average, 30 per year. The amendments further clarify which owner costs are eligible for reimbursement where crops are destroyed as part of an approved response plan.

### **Improving biosecurity public awareness and communication**

In cooperation with AusAID and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in August 2008 the department led a four-day workshop on biosecurity public awareness and avian influenza communication in Bali for the Indonesian Agency for Agricultural Quarantine. Representatives from seven provinces attended the workshop, which reviewed the effectiveness of Indonesian public awareness campaigns and developed

## AQIS response to human swine influenza outbreak

AQIS moved quickly to manage Australia's borders and screen international air travellers following the outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus (human swine influenza) in Mexico in April 2009.

AQIS had been working with the Department of Health and Ageing for several years on plans for managing border quarantine in the event of any major emerging public health issues. This included pandemic influenza preparedness measures, which meant that it had trained teams ready to respond when the time came.

Following advice from the Department of Health and Ageing on 30 April, AQIS required pilots of all aircraft arriving in Australia to report whether they had sick passengers on board. They also had to advise all passengers to tell the crew if they had travelled to infected areas and were feeling unwell.

AQIS moved quickly to get thermal scanners operational in Australia's major international airports. The scanners identified passengers with raised temperatures. These people were then referred to health authorities for medical attention. Despite the scale of the undertaking, the team was able to ensure that it caused minimal disruption to passengers.

On 1 May, in-flight announcements regarding new Health Declaration Card requirements were introduced and airlines started to distribute the new forms. By 6 May the new forms were in use for all air passengers to Australia.

As well as implementing national requirements for managing passengers arriving at international airports, AQIS liaised closely with other border agencies and state and territory governments on measures to minimise and monitor the spread of the H1N1 virus to and within Australia.

Staff safety remained a priority throughout the response. AQIS officers were trained in the use of personal protective equipment and Department of Health and Ageing protocols. Other DAFF officers were kept updated through regular bulletins on H1N1 influenza and the department's related operations.

'Our frontline staff responded professionally, efficiently and effectively—their work in helping to protect the public was outstanding', notes Chris Parker, the national manager of Passenger and Mail, Quarantine Operations.

strategies for future activities. This workshop formed the final part of the AusAID-funded Indonesian Quarantine Strengthening Project. The project, managed through AQIS's Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, contributed to enhancing effective communication with agricultural communities to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergency animal diseases.

### International activities

We contributed to the planning and implementation of locust management programs in Africa and Asia through FAO forums and FAO-sponsored programs. DAFF staff gave a presentation at the inaugural OIE Communicators Seminar in Bangkok in October 2008. Our staff also assisted with the facilitation of an OIE-sponsored, AusAID-funded workshop in Thailand designed to enhance the ability of regional veterinary services to manage the response to emergency animal diseases.

In February 2009, the department hosted the second Quadrilateral (Quads) Communicators Meeting with New Zealand, the US and Canada. The meeting focused on aspects of crisis communication, including the sharing of biosecurity communication planning frameworks and the development of risk communication toolkits. This was held in parallel with annual Plant Health Quadrilateral discussions with the same countries, at which we shared views on the March 2009 meeting of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures of the International Plant Protection Convention in Rome, and areas of common interest including science and quarantine operations collaboration and pest risk analysis processes.

In March 2009, the department hosted the Food Safety Quads Senior Officials meeting. The meeting was attended by senior officials from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US with responsibility for food safety, food regulation, import and

export inspection and certification. These meetings provide an important opportunity for senior officials to discuss matters of mutual importance in relation to food safety and international trade and to identify areas of information exchange and opportunities for harmonisation of food regulation between the four countries. The Food Safety Quads collaboration also contributes to our effective participation in international standards setting through Codex.

The department hosted the annual meeting of the Animal Health Quadrilateral Group in April 2009, where emergency response and preparedness issues were high on the agenda. A highlight of the meeting was a scenario exercise on the appropriate use of epidemiological models in decision making.

Australia actively participates in the International Plant Protection Convention through its participation in standard setting and as representative of the southwest Pacific on the governing Bureau of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, which oversees implementation of the Convention. Actions are consistent with the strategic objectives that were endorsed by Primary Industries ministers in April 2009.

### International animal and plant health, animal welfare and food standards

#### Advancing Australia's interests in standards forums and building regional capacity

The Australian International Plant Protection Convention Secretariat undertook consultation on and coordinated Australia's input to the development of international standards for phytosanitary measures, as well as meeting Australia's information-sharing obligations through the International Phytosanitary Portal. The secretariat convened a standards workshop in August 2008 to inform states and territories and industry and increase their participation in commenting on draft standards and raise awareness of the

convention, its standards and their relevance to and importance for Australian trade.

The Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer coordinated regional plant and animal health capacity-building activities, mainly through AusAID programs in Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam. The programs enable Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries to take part in activities that help to build plant and animal health capacity for international trade. In plant health, the focus has been on:

- establishing and maintaining specimen-based pest records, including training on the collection, preservation, identification and curation of pests and diseases
- diagnosing plant diseases and pests
- developing plant health information systems and regional diagnostics networks
- performing risk analysis and risk mitigation.

In animal health, the focus has been on developing epidemiological skills. Our work in 2008–09 included:

- training workshops in ASEAN countries on management and investigation of livestock diseases, collection and processing of plant pest and disease specimens, and managing phytosanitary risk
- mentoring visits by regional plant health specialists to Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam
- developing a strategic plan for an ASEAN Regional Diagnostic Network to facilitate identification of plant pests and diseases across the South-East Asian region
- translations (into Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao and Thai) of a plain-language booklet on the International Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

- establishment of an epidemiological network (EpiNet) to support the foot-and-mouth disease campaign in the Malaysia–Thailand–Myanmar shared zone
- investigations towards the establishment of zoning strategies for classical swine fever and porcine respiratory and reproductive syndrome in Cambodia and Vietnam.

In collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), the department developed the Avian Influenza Toolkit website. This comprehensive resource will assist APEC members and other countries to implement strengthened animal disease preparedness and response measures. The toolkit can be accessed at [www.aitoolkit.org](http://www.aitoolkit.org).

Through the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, in 2008–09 we collaborated on quarantine capacity-building and plant health survey work in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

### Contributing to bilateral discussions on technical market access problems

Biosecurity Australia and the AQIS and Trade and Market Access divisions of DAFF successfully dealt with a number of technical market access issues by providing expert advice and briefings for international negotiations (see page 67).

## Quarantine services

### Quarantine controls

AQIS supports Australia's quarantine integrity through appropriate border control and post-entry quarantine arrangements. We continue to implement and administer quarantine controls to minimise risk and respond to potential quarantine threats.

In 2008–09 AQIS conducted quarantine clearance of 1.2 million sea cargo containers, 260 000 air cargo containers,

1.5 million high-volume/low-value air cargo items and 10 400 incoming sea vessels.

Under the Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme, AQIS continued to train and accredit overseas quarantine regulators and fumigators in world's best practice methyl bromide fumigation. We formally implemented the scheme in Papua New Guinea in November 2008 and in the Philippines in December 2008 and signed an arrangement with Vietnam in April 2009. China has also agreed to implement the scheme.

We revised the Onshore Quarantine Fumigation Scheme to align it with the requirements of the AQIS Methyl Bromide Fumigation Standard. This will result in safer, more robust fumigation practices to assist with maintaining Australia's quarantine integrity.

AQIS inspections in 2008 detected a rise in the number of new vehicles imported into Australia from Asia that were contaminated with plant seed. In August 2008, AQIS staff and Australian vehicle importer representatives met with Thai government and industry bodies in Bangkok. Recommendations were made to reduce vehicle transport and storage contamination through cleaning and pre-shipment inspection. A follow-up delegation from the Thai agriculture department and Thai car manufacturing industry visited Australia in February 2009 to observe new vehicle inspection activities at the Port of Brisbane and Port Kembla. We began negotiating with the Thai agriculture department on an arrangement to inspect vehicles to AQIS standards before they are exported to Australia.



Imported vehicle inspection in Brisbane (photo: Mitchell Bright)

## Protecting Australia's northernmost gateway

On a remote Torres Strait island just seven kilometres from Papua New Guinea, Stan and Gadu Banu help safeguard Australia's northernmost gateway from exotic pests, weeds and diseases.

The brothers, who are AQIS officers, are stationed on Boigu Island, one of the three most northern islands of the Torres Strait group.

Boigu, Saibai and Dauan islands are the only three places in the Pacific where you can stand on Australian soil and see another country.

AQIS has five officers permanently stationed on these three islands and around 20 officers based on 12 other Torres Strait islands located in two designated quarantine zones—the Torres Strait Protected Zone and the Special Quarantine Zone. They are part of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy to monitor and protect Australia's northern gateway.

Stan and Gadu joined AQIS in February 2006. They say they love living in such a remote area and are acutely aware of the potential quarantine risks from the neighbouring countries of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

Their duties include clearing fruit fly and screw worm fly traps, which are set up to monitor the yearly incursion of insects carried on winds from Papua New Guinea. They spray any detected fruit flies and also clear passengers and cargo boarding boats and aircraft travelling south.

Another job that keeps the brothers busy is inspecting traditional handmade goods that Papua New Guinea nationals bring across to trade with Torres Strait Islanders. Boigu and Saibai islands receive many of these visitors because of their closeness to Papua New Guinea.

Gary Maroske, AQIS regional manager, Far North Queensland, says quarantine staff play a key role in monitoring Australia's northernmost gateway.

'They are crucial in intercepting exotic pests, weeds and diseases that could use the Torres Strait islands as stepping stones to mainland Australia', he said.



Stan Banu (left, in uniform) and Gadu Banu (right) inspect a coconut frond broom, Kundu drum and woven pandanus mat for exotic pests, weeds or diseases. Such items are brought to Boigu Island by Papua New Guinea nationals for traditional trading (photo: AQIS)

Arrangements have been put in place for Talisman Saber 2009, a biannual US–Australia military exercise involving 2000 personnel that is conducted in Australia in July. AQIS and the US Department of Agriculture have reached an agreement that will allow AQIS-trained and approved US inspectors to perform quarantine inspections of US military vessels, aircraft and amphibious craft entering Australia. The US Department of Agriculture will officially certify that AQIS requirements have been met under this government-to-government arrangement.

AQIS began discussions with industry to implement third-party offshore cleaning services for used agricultural, mining and forestry machinery, to eliminate any quarantine risk from contamination. We have completed a comprehensive revision of giant African snail risk management strategies. The review, implementation and verification of this new evidence-based approach will focus on containers and goods from countries with significant giant African snail detection rates.

During 2008–09, AQIS officers delivered accreditation training to over 800 industry participants in the Broker Accreditation Scheme, the Quarantine Approved Premises Class One Scheme and the Empty Containers Scheme. In addition, 1600 industry parties undertook online accreditation training. Over 3200 industry participants operating under a range of third-party schemes completed online training to refresh their knowledge of the quarantine risks and AQIS requirements associated with these arrangements.

Nationwide training in ballast water management began in February 2009 for Seaports Program officers, with presentations at major ports by AQIS inspection and technical staff.

We are further developing an electronic version of the Quarantine Pre-Arrival Report (eQPAP) since trials began in 2008. Changes to the regulations have been drafted and implemented.

The rollout of mobile on-the-job information technology to AQIS regional inspectors began in July 2008. This technology gives officers on-the-spot access to AQIS systems, which enables them to provide more timely services to clients.

The AQIS Detector Dogs and Operational Services Program began to deploy passive-response labradors in airports to deliver a more flexible and capable screening service. Labradors were sourced from the Customs National Dog Breeding Centre in Victoria and trained during early 2009. They have been deployed to airport operations in Brisbane and Melbourne.

In 2008–09 our animal quarantine operation issued 7238 import permits for live animals and animal genetic material. Government quarantine stations handled 2204 cats, 4078 dogs, 565 horses, 318 pigeons, 24 camelids and 25 600 hatching eggs.

We completed detailed process mapping for the importation of cats and dogs in December 2008, of ornamental fish in September 2008 and of genetic material in October 2008. Process mapping allows for the identification of areas requiring improvement, which results in more effective and efficient quarantine operations and services.

In 2008–09 our plant quarantine and biological imports operation processed 10 863 import permit applications. Thirty-nine pre-clearance inspections of fresh fruit were conducted in China, New Zealand and the US.

The import conditions for dietary supplements and natural medicines containing prohibited plant material were simplified and those for commonly imported spices were revised.

We applied emergency measures for fresh and frozen agaricus and truffle mushroom imports, and for citrus imports from certain parts of the US (to prevent the spread of citrus greening disease and its vector Asiatic citrus psyllid). Our emergency measures successfully prevented the introduction of serious exotic pests of citrus and truffles, and of potato spindle tuber viroid in tomato seed.

## Indigenous trainees graduate to full-time jobs

Less than 18 months after joining the department as Indigenous trainees in 2007, Keshia Clarke, Chris Ganambarr and Martina Dorante have taken up challenging full-time jobs in AQIS regional offices in the Northern Territory and Queensland.

Along the way, they graduated with a Certificate III in government and mastered a range of operational skills and duties as they rotated through different work areas. Martina was also named Trainee of the Year 2008 under the University of New England Partnerships Program.

Keshia and Chris, whose roots are in Darwin and Nhulunbuy, work in AQIS's Northern Territory regional office. During their one-year training period, they spent time in seaports, cargo, airports and corporate programs and with the Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy.

Martina has worked alongside her south Queensland colleagues in AQIS, facilitating perishable imports in air cargo, clearing personal effects at bond stores, conducting passenger clearances at Brisbane Airport and conducting container inspections at the Port of Brisbane.

In June 2009, Chris was working in the airports program, and able to put to use his interest in film-making and knowledge of cameras by setting up and running the thermal imaging camera when it was introduced amid fears of a global outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus.

Keshia was in Okinawa in Japan on a short-term deployment, providing off-shore clearance for military personnel and machinery coming to Australia to take part in Exercise Talisman Saber.

And Martina was working with 'a great team' at the Brisbane International Mail Exchange.

Brian Read, AQIS regional manager Northern Territory, said Chris and Keshia had risen to every challenge.

'We've been particularly impressed with their willing attitude and ability to take on new opportunities and make the most of them', he said.

Brian said taking part in the traineeship program had 'proved beneficial for the region, our staff and the trainees'.

Martina describes the traineeship package developed by AQIS as 'excellent' and says she would encourage other Indigenous Australians to follow the same path.

'I was able to get a comprehensive view and hands-on experience of each work area. By experiencing the vast range of responsibilities across the organisation, I have a greater understanding and appreciation for our work', she said.

Keshia, Chris and Martina joined the department through the Australian Public Service Commission's Indigenous Entry Level Recruitment Programme.



AQIS Indigenous graduates after presentation of their qualifications. Pictured left to right, Keshia Clarke, Chris Ganambarr, Kathryn Hogan, Don Beard (AQIS National Office) and Martina Dorante (photo: APSC)

## Awareness of quarantine requirements

Under the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, we collaborated with government officials in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Timor-Leste to help keep quarantine risks offshore. We developed awareness materials such as signage to inform people living in the Torres Strait of regulations regarding the movement of high-risk items, and conducted information visits to villages. Under the strategy we engaged Indigenous people in conducting quarantine activities, including insect collection and reporting on possible incursions.

In 2008–09 we developed procedural manuals that outlined the AQIS standards and requirements for undertaking disease screening of *Eucalyptus* spp, *Humulus* spp and *Vitis* spp nursery stock material. Use of the manuals will contribute to maintaining consistency across all plant quarantine stations handling these imports. We also released:

- revised import conditions for plant species that are hosts of *Xylella fastidiosa*
- a revised import protocol for *Punica* spp (pomegranate) nursery stock imports in response to emerging disease risks
- an import protocol for *Rosa* spp plant material from countries where *Phytophthora ramorum* (sudden oak death) is known to occur.

## Raising awareness

In March 2009, AQIS contributed to an editorial for the annual edition of *Shipping Australia*—a magazine distributed to a large number of companies involved with wharf activities—informing readers of AQIS's cargo management and shipping work. This included the giant African snail review, the development of eQPAR, the Ship Sanitation Certificate, the Proclaimed Ports Project and the publicity campaign 'Australia's Most Unwanted'.

As part of an overall strategy to encourage importers to clean their used agricultural, mining and forestry machinery before importing it to Australia, we developed a

flyer for clients that can be downloaded from the AQIS website. A flyer advising clients of the requirements when importing bulk fertilisers and other commodities is also available.

A brochure warning yacht owners and importers of timber vessels about the danger of burrowing termite pests was revised, reprinted and distributed through shipping agencies. This is part of the overall review of import conditions for all yachts, either sailed in or imported as cargo, to ensure consistency in import requirements and inspection procedures regionally and nationally.

To promote awareness of cargo-related quarantine issues, AQIS developed the Cargo Management eBulletin. In 2008–09, 10 editions were published on the AQIS website and provided to industry through the Cargo Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia website.

AQIS successfully negotiated with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to amend two questions on the incoming passenger card to assist in the detection of didymo algae risk items. We also sent letters and fact sheets and gave presentations to special interest groups to raise awareness of the risk posed by didymo algae to Australian waterways.

The AQIS International Mail Program raised awareness of quarantine requirements offshore by using Australia Post's relationships with international postal authorities to inform postal clients of the requirements.

We continued to release alerts on ICON, AQIS's import conditions database, to inform industry of any 'hot topics' or major changes to AQIS import requirements.

AQIS continued the *Quarantine Matters!* communications campaign to increase awareness of Australian quarantine requirements. The campaign uses mainstream television, and press advertising, inflight videos, airport signage, media liaison and special event, such as travel shows and multicultural festival.

AQIS launched the latest phase of the campaign, 'Big Bugs', which aims to build on existing awareness of the dangers posed by pests and diseases that could be lurking in items from overseas. The department commissioned market-tracking research among the target audiences of the 'Big Bugs' advertising campaign. The review was completed in November 2008. The report will evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign and highlight new opportunities for reaching specific target audiences.

We are conducting research to evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the *Quarantine Matters!* communication strategy. One research objective is to highlight effective communication channels that will enable AQIS to better target quarantine and other biosecurity-related messages to industry.

**Promoting compliance**

AQIS continued to work with industry groups to develop and promote strategies to encourage compliance.

In 2008–09 we issued more than 65 Import Clearance Notices to industry to advise of changes to procedures, the introduction of new fees or charges, and updates on particular treatments or commodity arrangements. These notices are discussed with industry representatives before publication.

The AQIS/Industry Cargo Consultative Committee is the principal advisory forum for AQIS and the cargo handling and importing industry to consult on all issues arising from the management of Australia's Import Clearance and Seaport Quarantine Strategy. The committee met on three occasions in 2008–09. It also held subcommittee meetings focusing on finance, machinery, quarantine intervention, industry partnerships, express carriers, seaports and fumigation.

Compliance agreements were reviewed and developed for a number of state government plant quarantine facilities and research organisations handling high-risk introductions.



'Big Bugs' *Quarantine Matters!* advertising campaign

## Implementation of recommendations from the Callinan inquiry

See 'Special report: Equine influenza inquiry and response—two years on' on page xxviii.

## Quarantine and biosecurity review

See 'Special report: Review of Australian quarantine and biosecurity ('Beale review')' on page xiii.

## Other work

### Animal welfare

The department's Animal Welfare Branch continued to deal with a large volume of correspondence from campaigns driven by animal welfare and animal rights organisations. Major campaigns in 2008–09 included calls to halt live animal exports to the Middle East, mulesing, long-distance transport of animals, intensive farming practices (particularly in the poultry and pig industries) and transport of dairy calves.

The new Animal Welfare Committee, established to replace the Animal Welfare Working Group of the Animal Health Committee under the Primary Industries Standing Committee, began operations in 2008–09 with secretariat support from the Animal Welfare Branch.

Working with representatives from other countries across the region, we developed an implementation plan for the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for Asia, the Far East and Oceania. The implementation plan was considered at the OIE General Session in Paris in May 2009. Further consideration of the plan has been set down for the Asia, the Far East and Oceania Regional Commission meeting in November 2009.

A DAFF officer was selected by the FAO to be one of 10 experts to develop recommendations on global animal welfare capacity building. The draft

recommendations, released in December 2008, were well received by FAO senior management. The final report is available on the FAO website. In May 2009 the FAO launched a new gateway website for farm animal welfare topics, available at [www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/animal-welfare/en](http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/animal-welfare/en). The site recognises Australia's efforts on animal welfare.

### Quarantine

During 2008–09 the AQIS International Mail Program cleared over 135 million mail articles and intercepted over 110 000 items of quarantine concern. The AQIS Airports Program cleared over 12.5 million passengers and intercepted over 500 000 items of quarantine concern.

The Imported Food Program began to publish regular reports summarising the results of AQIS food safety inspection activities under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme. The reports are available on the AQIS website.

The AQIS Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy team engaged the Bureau of Resource Sciences to examine screw-worm fly-trapping operations in the Torres Strait. The bureau recommended changes to the trapping strategy, which resulted in traps being removed from Prince of Wales Island and trapping being conducted in the northern Torres Strait islands of Saibai, Dauan and Boigu.

## Outlook for 2009–10

From 1 July 2009, AQIS, Biosecurity Australia and Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division operations will be amalgamated to create the DAFF Biosecurity Services Group. To maintain Australia's enviable animal and plant health status, the group will work to deliver a continuum of service across pre-border, border and post-border operations. This will allow an integrated focus on the safe movement of animals, plants, people and cargo to and from Australia. It will also

support an effective response to any pest and disease incursions that arise. Risk will be managed through science-based measures, focusing resources in the greatest areas of risk, increasing the use of prevention and preparedness measures, and partnerships with clients, industry sectors and state and territory biosecurity agencies.

Biosecurity Services Group priorities for 2009–10 include ensuring that we continue to respond to the endorsed

recommendations of the Beale review (see page xiii) in its report *One biosecurity: a working partnership*.

We will strengthen our capabilities and impact through a range of measures, including implementation of improved governance arrangements, development of an effective risk–return model and continued improvements to standard operating procedures, work instruction, training and systems verification.

### Performance under administered items of Output 1.4

**Table 9** Output 1.4 performance—administered items

Administered item 1.4.1 Commonwealth contribution to the operating costs of Animal Health Australia	
<b>Budget</b>	\$1.230 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Fund the Australian Government membership contribution to Animal Health Australia (AHA). The AHA seeks to minimise the impact of diseases on Australian animal production industries and implement measures to assist in maintaining Australia's highly favourable animal health status.
<b>Measured by</b>	Payment of agreed contribution to the operating costs of AHA.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Contribution paid.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
Administered item 1.4.2 International Organisations Contribution—World Organisation for Animal Health	
<b>Budget</b>	\$0.225 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Pay Australia's annual membership contribution to the World Organisation for Animal Health.
<b>Measured by</b>	Payment of membership contribution.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Contribution paid.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
Administered item 1.4.3 Other Exotic Disease Preparedness Program	
<b>Budget</b>	\$0.559 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Enhance the veterinary community's awareness of exotic animal diseases through the delivery of practitioner courses developed by the states and territories and through the publication of information in the <i>Australian Veterinary Journal</i> .

**Table 9** Output 1.4 performance—administered items (continued)

<b>Administered item 1.4.3 Other Exotic Disease Preparedness Program (continued)</b>	
<b>Measured by</b>	Enhancement of the veterinary community's awareness of exotic animal diseases.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Veterinary community's awareness of exotic animal diseases enhanced through activities funded under the Exotic Diseases Preparedness Program.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
<b>Administered item 1.4.4 Payment to CSIRO—Contribution to the operating costs of the Australian Animal Health Laboratory</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	\$7.138 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Maintain and improve Australia's capacity to prepare for and respond to emergency animal disease outbreaks by supporting national diagnostic laboratory capacity located at Australia's high-level containment facility, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL).
<b>Measured by</b>	Payment of agreed contribution.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Contribution paid.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
<b>Administered item 1.4.5 Quarantine Research and Preparedness Plan</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	\$1.800 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Improve Australia's preparedness to deal with biosecurity threats through a contribution to the implementation of the national fruit fly strategy (NFFS), increased diagnostic capability and the development of on-farm biosecurity plans.
<b>Measured by</b>	Delivery of agreed elements of NFFS. Improvement in diagnostic capability. Completion of first stage of planning to increase capacity for on-farm biosecurity.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Agreed elements of NFFS delivered. Diagnostic capability as a component of emergency response preparedness for the horticulture industry is improved, as measured by completion of milestones. First stage of planning to increase capacity for on-farm biosecurity completed.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
<b>Administered item 1.4.6 Securing the Future—Protecting our Industries from Biological, Chemical and Physical Risks</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	\$3.000 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Support capacity building and intelligence gathering and dissemination to improve Australia's capacity and capability to respond to biosecurity threats in a more systematic, effective and timely manner, and pay the Australian Government membership contribution to Plant Health Australia (PHA).
<b>Measured by</b>	Extent of progress on activities to support capacity building and intelligence gathering and dissemination to improve Australia's capacity and capability to respond to biosecurity threats in a more systematic, effective and timely manner. Payment of membership contribution to PHA.

**Table 9** Output 1.4 performance—administered items (continued)

<b>Administered item 1.4.6 Securing the Future—Protecting our Industries from Biological, Chemical and Physical Risks (continued)</b>	
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Timely progress on (or completion of) all activities in accordance with agreed milestones. PHA contribution paid.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
<b>Administered item 1.4.7 Citrus Canker Eradication Program</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	\$0.408 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Contribute to the national response to the 2004 outbreak of citrus canker in the Emerald region of Queensland, with the aim of eventual eradication.
<b>Measured by</b>	Continuing absence of disease, as determined by agreed surveillance of new plantings and regrowth.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	No disease detected during the agreed surveillance period. Declaration of eradication by January 2009.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
<b>Comments</b>	2008–09 allocated budget was not drawn down, as the program used underspends from 2007–08 as agreed by the National Management Group.
<b>Administered item 1.4.8 Eradication of the Red Imported Fire Ant</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	\$3.274 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Contribute to the national response to the threat posed by red imported fire ants, with an objective of eventual eradication through the Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (RIFA) initiated in 2001.
<b>Measured by</b>	Effectiveness of delivery of the RIFA program.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	RIFA program activities implemented in accordance with agreed plans.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
<b>Administered item 1.4.9 Exotic Disease Preparedness Program</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	\$0.303 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Coordinate surveillance, research, training and communications in relation to animal diseases of wildlife and feral animals.
<b>Measured by</b>	Effectiveness of coordination of surveillance, research, training and communications in relation to animal diseases of wildlife and feral animals.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Program activities coordinated as planned and agreed milestones met.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.

**Table 9** Output 1.4 performance—administered items (continued)

Administered item 1.4.10 Other Exotic Disease Preparedness Program	
<b>Budget</b>	\$0.084 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Provide funding for agreed activities that enhance Australia's preparedness for exotic animal diseases, including the ongoing involvement of non-government veterinarians in national animal emergency disease preparedness and surveillance activities such as the Australian Government Veterinary Reserve, monitoring the distribution of economically important insect-borne viruses of livestock and their vectors through the jointly funded National Arbovirus Monitoring Program and the Australian Veterinary Practitioners Surveillance Network.
<b>Measured by</b>	Provision of funding for agreed activities.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Funding provided.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Target met.
Administered item 1.4.11 Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement—Equine Influenza	
<b>Budget</b>	\$20.100 million
<b>Key performance indicator</b>	Coordinate the operation of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) in response to the equine influenza outbreak. Coordinate the operation of the Emergency Plan Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) following reports of emergency plant pest (EPP) incursions.
<b>Measured by</b>	Effectiveness of coordination of EADRA and EPPRD as measured by National Management Group agreement to recommendations concerning proposed responses to emergency animal diseases and EPPs under the provisions of the agreements.
<b>2008–09 target</b>	Recommendations agreed to by National Management Group. Equine influenza eradicated.
<b>Performance outcome</b>	Targets met.

## Performance under departmental outputs in Output 1.4

**Table 10** Output 1.4 performance—departmental outputs

Key performance indicators	2008–09 target	2008–09 achievement
<b>Key processes contributing to, and increasing, national animal and plant health arrangements are progressed</b>	Nationally consistent ballast water legislation is implemented by 30 June 2009	Legislation prepared. Progress to enactment will depend on legislative program priorities.
	Biofouling guidelines to manage marine pest risks are adopted by all sectors by 30 June 2009	Guidelines released on 25 June 2009. Implementation plans agreed nationally.
	All jurisdictions sign the Intergovernmental Agreement to enhance AusBIOSEC by 30 June 2009	Matter being addressed in response to recommendations of the Beale review (see page xiii).
<b>Biosecurity programs contribute to national preparedness for pest, disease and contaminant emergency incidents</b>	<p>Components of the Quarantine Research and Preparedness Plan (QRPP) to develop and implement a National Fruit Fly Strategy, increase diagnostic capability and commence planning to increase capacity for on-farm biosecurity plans are implemented, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a National Fruit Fly Strategy Implementation Committee by August 2008</li> <li>• Diagnostic capacity and capability as a component of emergency response preparedness for the horticulture industry is improved throughout 2008–09</li> <li>• Planning to increase capacity for on-farm biosecurity plans has progressed throughout 2008–09</li> </ul>	<p>Draft National Fruit Fly Strategy has been endorsed by industry and governments and an implementation plan including funding arrangements is being developed.</p> <p>Elements of the strategy have been implemented, including establishment of an implementation committee, development of contingency plans, collation of knowledge on fruit fly management in a central location, and progress towards the development of a national network and a systems approach to managing the risk of fruit fly on horticultural commodities in trade.</p> <p>Committee convened by Plant Health Australia in November 2008 following release of the draft strategy for community discussion. It met four times to develop the implementation plan.</p> <p>Diagnostic capability increased through development of new protocols, scholarships and expert training, and new content in the Pest and Disease Image Library.</p> <p>Progress made towards increasing capacity for on-farm biosecurity through a gap analysis of factors affecting community engagement in biosecurity, a national workshop and two regional focus groups, and a national eforum for exchange of information between community engagement practitioners, all overseen by a national reference group of industry and government representatives.</p>

**Table 10** Output 1.4 performance—departmental outputs (continued)

Key performance indicators	2008–09 target	2008–09 achievement
	The Securing the Future: Protecting our Industries from Biological, Chemical and Physical Risks Program is supported by the development of an intelligence network and integration of data collection systems by 30 June 2009	Progress made in development of an intelligence-gathering and analysis system for emerging animal and plant health issues.
	Review conclusions from actual and simulated national responses are incorporated into response documents throughout 2008–09	Completed a review of DAFF's response following the 2007 outbreak of equine influenza. Lessons identified from this and other responses, including citrus canker and contingency planning simulation activities, continued to be incorporated into the department's response documents and those of stakeholders, Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia.
<b>Implementation of a rapid response to pest, disease and contaminant emergencies</b>	Australia satisfies World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) criteria for equine influenza freedom by 31 December 2008	Last case of equine influenza in Australia was on 25 December 2007. In accordance with international requirements, Australia met OIE criteria and declared freedom from equine influenza to the OIE 12 months after this date (25 December 2008).
	Australia declared free of citrus canker in January 2009	International Plant Protection Convention notification of eradication of citrus canker made on 23 January 2009.
	A reduction in the number of reported nests of red imported fire ants during 2008–09, in line with eventual eradication strategies	Number of reported nests increased slightly over last year. A revised strategy for eradication is being developed and will be informed by an independent review and research into more effective detection methods in rural areas.
<b>Enhancement of regional networks providing early warning of new sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) threats to Australia with increased capacity to mitigate threats off shore</b>	Building the capacity of regional countries to manage their agricultural, fishery and forestry pests, diseases and contaminants through conducting training workshops on technical standards and standard setting processes (SPS Capacity Building—ASEAN member countries) and establishing regional networks for SPS information exchange throughout 2008–09	Initial planning workshop on implementation of an ASEAN Regional Diagnostics Network held in Lao PDR, May 2009. Network will facilitate the identification of pests and diseases and thus enable sharing of SPS-related information and complement work within Australia to develop a similar network that will increase regional capacity to rapidly and accurately identify pests of economic importance. OIE sponsored, AusAID-funded workshop conducted in Thailand, July 2008.
<b>Australian quarantine border interventions reduce the risk of entry of exotic pests and diseases</b>	Intervention and effectiveness targets are achieved	International Mail Program—see Table 11. Airports Program—see Table 12. Freight intervention—see Table 13. Vessel intervention—see Table 14.
	100% of exotic pests and diseases identified in goods in post-entry quarantine are treated and/or contained	100% target met.

**Table 11** Performance against targets for the International Mail Program, 2008–09

Quarter	Intervention targets	Interventions actual	Higher risk effectiveness targets	Higher risk effectiveness actual	Risk effectiveness targets	Risk effectiveness actual
1	81%	100%	87%	81%	50%	89%
2	81%	100%	87%	76%	50%	85%
3	81%	100%	87%	95%	50%	87%
4	81%	100%	87%	86%	50%	88%

**Table 12** Performance against targets for the Airports Program, 2008–09

Quarter	Intervention targets	Interventions actual	Higher risk effectiveness targets	Higher risk effectiveness actual	Risk effectiveness targets	Risk effectiveness actual
1	100%	75%	96%	93%	50%	79%
2	100%	77%	96%	90%	50%	79%
3	100%	73%	96%	91%	50%	82%
4	100%	75%	96%	90%	50%	74%

**Table 13** Freight intervention rate, July 2008 – March 2009

Date	Import containers external cleanliness	High volume low value consignments	Aircraft unit load devices
Jul 08	100%	93%	97%
Aug 08	100%	92%	96%
Sep 08	100%	90%	97%
Oct 08	100%	92%	96%
Nov 08	100%	93%	97%
Dec 08	100%	87%	96%
Jan 09	100%	92%	96%
Feb 09	100%	87%	95%
Mar 09	100%	79%	94%

**Table 14** Vessel intervention results, 2008–09

Quarter	Intervention rate
1	100%
2	100%
3	100%
4	100%

### Stakeholder consultations

Consultations and workshops were held with representatives from industry, government and animal welfare organisations on the proposed National Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for exhibited animals, horses, and land transport of livestock.

A workshop on the International Plant Protection Convention was held to increase awareness of the convention and to encourage consideration of draft international standards for phytosanitary measures.

Representatives from all commercial poultry industry sectors, Commonwealth and state governments and Animal Health attended meetings on biosecurity issues in

the poultry industry. The department gathered stakeholder views, discussed national avian influenza issues and collaborated on developing the minimum national standard for biosecurity in the industry. Representatives also met at the annual Government–Industry Avian Influenza Forum, held in Canberra in June 2009, to progress national policy issues, share information and report on progress.

AQIS hosted a number of Industry Consultative Committee meetings with different stakeholder groups (see Table 15 for a list of committees). At these forums we discussed issues including controls on food and beverage imports, the review of cargo quarantine and entry management systems, animal health, and biosecurity measures. National Tripartite Consultative Committee members from AQIS, Australia Post and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service looked at strategies for screening, processing and intervention.

AQIS supported the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council, which provided advice to the Minister, Secretary and AQIS Executive Director. AQIS also participated in forums on interstate and intrastate plant movements and the importation of animal genetic material and tobacco.

**Table 15** AQIS consultative and advisory committees and groups, 2008–09

Committee/group and meetings during year	Significant achievements
<p><b>AQIS—Grain Industry Consultative Committee</b> September, December 2008; April 2009</p>	<p>Held teleconferences in February and March 2009 to discuss AQIS fee structure in light of the lapse of 40% government contributions.</p> <p>Members asked to participate in Ministerial Task Force—Grains to develop a reform agenda to explore efficient and effective structural arrangements for the delivery of government grain export inspection and audit activities; interim report delivered.</p>
<p><b>Seafood Exports Consultative Committee</b> November 2008, May 2009</p>	<p>Discussed activities relating to the Ministerial Task Force, Beale review, EXDOC update, market access issues, financial reports and staff training.</p>
<p><b>Dairy Export Industry Consultative Committee</b> August 2008, March 2009</p>	<p>Focused on importing country audits, fees review and the outcomes of the Beale review.</p>
<p><b>AQIS—Halal Industry Consultative Committee</b> July 2008, February 2009</p>	<p>Introduced verification of halal certification bodies.</p>
<p><b>AQIS—Export Wild Game Meat Industry Consultative Committee</b> Ad hoc meetings</p>	<p>Continued to meet as required to consider matters related to the production and export of wild game meat. Last formally met in February 2008 but other meetings have been held with industry since late 2008.</p>
<p><b>AQIS—Biologicals Consultative Group</b> September 2008, April 2009</p>	<p>Reviewed specific issues affecting biological import industry groups and provided industry with program updates.</p> <p>Ran two workshops for specific industry groups (laboratory materials and vaccines)</p> <p>Addressed specific issues relating to import of veterinary vaccines through the Veterinary Vaccine Subcommittee.</p>
<p><b>AQIS—Industry Cargo Consultative Committee</b> August, December 2008; April 2009</p>	<p>Considered high-level strategic issues, including the Beale review and biosecurity, ICON redevelopment, National Appointment System, Quarantine Operational Framework, Import Clearance Effectiveness, Self Assessment Clearance, review of import clearance and sea ports quarantine service fees related to cost recovery, and other developments and achievements within the Import Clearance and Sea Ports programs.</p>
<p><b>Export Meat Industry Advisory Committee</b> July, November 2008; April 2009</p>	<p>Secured industry agreement to the development of a national baseline for microbiological testing results. This will allow industry to benchmark the establishments' performance in microbiological testing. Key market access issues were discussed.</p>
<p><b>Horticulture Exports Consultative Committee</b> September 2008, February 2009</p>	<p>Continued to consider strategic direction for the programs relevant to horticulture exports, significant proposed changes to policy and operational procedures, budgets, cost-recovery mechanisms, charge levels and performance issues such as efficiency and effectiveness.</p>
<p><b>Imported Food Consultative Committee</b> November 2008, April 2009</p>	<p>Trialed compliance agreements for food importers.</p> <p>Published bi-annual imported food inspection data.</p> <p>Updated conditions of appointment for analysts appointed under the Imported Food Control Act.</p>

**Table 15** AQIS consultative and advisory committees and groups, 2008–09 (continued)

Committee/group and meetings during year	Significant achievements
<b>Livestock Export Industry Consultative Committee</b> August, December 2008; March 2009	Continued stakeholder consultation on a range of live animal export issues.
<b>Organic Industry Export Consultative Committee</b> November 2008, May 2009	Consulted with industry representatives on management of the organic program, fee structures and financial reporting, organic standards, clarification on requirements of the Organic Orders, and overseas country negotiations and requirements.
<b>Post Entry Plant Industry Consultative Committee</b> October 2008, March 2009	Discussed a range of post-entry quarantine issues, including strategies to increase the level of engagement of the nursery and garden industry in the committee.
<b>Horse Industry Consultative Committee</b> July, October 2008; April 2009	Established a new consultative committee to advise AQIS on a broad range of horse import and export issues, and the implementation of the government's response to the equine influenza inquiry recommendations.

## Conferences

A DAFF officer was selected by the FAO to join its expert panel on capacity building for good animal welfare practices (see page 101). Department staff also participated in animal welfare conferences convened by OIE, the Australasian Regional Association for Zoological Parks and Aquaria, and the Animal Transportation Association. We provided a lecturer and tutor to the European Union SANCO conference in Hungary to speak on the influence of culture and religion on welfare practices at slaughter.

Department officers participated in the trade display at Australasian Aquaculture 2008, a joint international conference and trade show. We attended FAO forums on locust management programs to be implemented in Africa and Timor-Leste. A DAFF officer gave a presentation on plant health data systems, diagnostics and trade at the 4th International Symposium on Tropical and Subtropical Fruits. Technical specialists also attended the International Congress of Plant Pathology in Turin and the XIII International Congress of Entomology in Durban to gain exposure to the latest developments worldwide and present some of our own developments that assist in the management of plant pests.

In the area of laboratory diagnostics and their applications for animal diseases, department officers attended conferences convened by the Australian Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians and the World Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians. Discussions were held on national and international directions in the field, including the development of international laboratory networks.

AQIS officers attended conferences in Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea concerning biosecurity and emerging diagnostic technologies. Plant health issues in the South Pacific were also discussed. At the Australian Veterinary Authority annual conference, AQIS representatives updated participants on the implementation of the Callinan inquiry recommendations. AQIS also participated in forest biosecurity forums in Australia, Europe and the South Pacific.

A DAFF officer led an international study on the impact of climate change and environmental changes on emerging and re-emerging animal disease and animal production and, as rapporteur, presented the results of the study at the OIE General Session. The study showed the need for a new approach to prevent new threats linked to climate change and the globalisation of trade.

## AQIS clears World Youth Day pilgrims

AQIS officers facilitated the clearance of thousands of pilgrims who arrived at Sydney Airport to attend World Youth Day in Sydney from 15 to 20 July 2008.

The event, which was established in 1986 by Pope John Paul II, is reputed to be the largest youth gathering in the world.

More than 120 000 international visitors from 170 countries travelled to Sydney for the 2008 event. While many of the participants arrived individually, others came as registered pilgrims in organised groups that sometimes numbered more than 200.

In the two-week period from 6 to 20 July, an estimated 50 000 registered pilgrims arrived, many aboard special aircraft. They significantly boosted average passenger numbers during what is normally a peak period. On 13 July 2008, AQIS cleared a record 21 447 international arrivals in Sydney—around 4000 more than the number cleared on the same date in 2007.

AQIS officers cleared participants at the highest level, including His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and 40 Cardinals, as well as the special papal vehicles flown in for the event. AQIS also liaised with the Department of Health and Ageing on the importation of the remains of the Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a holy priest deceased for more than 80 years.

AQIS's preparations for World Youth Day began the previous year, when the Cross and Icon arrived in July 2007. For the next 12 months, AQIS liaised with Sydney Airport Corporation and other Australian Government border agencies to manage the surge in visitor numbers and the arrival of 36 additional aircraft for the event.

Prospective pilgrims received information material produced by AQIS on Australian quarantine requirements. AQIS also worked closely with the World Youth Day organising committee to ensure that quarantine conditions were met.

AQIS airport manager for New South Wales Magda Hribar said that World Youth Day had been a major logistics exercise for AQIS and all other agencies involved.

'We put a great deal of effort into planning and consultation with Sydney Airport, the other border agencies and World Youth Day organisers to ensure a smooth arrival for the visiting pilgrims', she said.

'Our staff took this high-profile event in their stride and conducted their duties with professionalism.'