



**Australian Government**

**Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service**

## **MEDIA RELEASE** **Quarantine Matters!**

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### **KOREAN COMMUNITY GOES BACKSTAGE WITH AQIS**

**Sydney, 20 June 2006** – Today the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) held an exclusive function for media, community leaders and stakeholders to share the ‘not so secret life’ of Australian quarantine.

AQIS presented this unique backstage insight into the world of quarantine to help the Korean community understand more about the crucial role AQIS performs and how they can help.

Graham Turner, AQIS Regional Manager of NSW said, “Members of the Korean community have been invited here today, to gain a real life experience and understanding of AQIS. I encourage the media and community leaders to share their first-hand knowledge of quarantine with their communities to encourage a sense of shared responsibility that is integral to effective quarantine.”

Guests were invited to undertake an airport tour to experience AQIS’s work first hand. They saw the detector dogs in action, as well as X-ray machines - a timely reminder that AQIS screens all items of luggage.

High-risk quarantine items were on display, giving guests the opportunity to see the array of items commonly brought into Australia. Another highlight was the entomology display of exotic pests, ranging from the flesh-eating maggots of the screw-worm fly to evasive timber pests. There was even a giant African snail! AQIS officers were kept busy explaining why the items pose a risk to Australia.

AQIS wants to remind incoming passengers to declare all food, plant and animal products to avoid on-the-spot fines of \$220 or prosecution with fines up to A\$66,000. Declaring does not automatically result in items being seized, in many cases these items will be returned after inspection or treatment. However, any item that has a pest or disease risk will be withheld.

Even if the item is seized, having declared it to quarantine means people will not receive a fine. It is that easy!

Many quarantine risk items are also mailed to Australia. AQIS screens 100% of all international mail sent to Australia and mail containing any food, plant or animal product is opened and inspected. "It is essential that people inform their friends and relatives overseas about our strict quarantine laws and to honestly list all items in the parcel on the declaration label," Mr Turner said.

The event provided a great opportunity for representatives of the Korean community and the media to gain invaluable insight into the work of quarantine in Australia. This insight will hopefully help their communities avoid losing their precious cargo or face hefty fines or even prosecution.

Australia has some of the toughest quarantine standards in the world. Quarantine controls at Australia's borders reduce the risk of exotic pests and diseases entering Australia and potentially damaging the \$32 billion agriculture export industries as well as our environment, tourism industries and lifestyle.

To find more information about Australian quarantine please:

- visit [www.aqis.gov.au/korean](http://www.aqis.gov.au/korean); or
- contact your travel agent for a free copy of the brochures *What Can't I Take Into Australia?* and *What Can't Be Mailed To Australia?* both in Korean.

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