



16 October 2003

ANIMAL BIOSECURITY POLICY MEMORANDUM 2003/27

IMPORTATION OF ELEPHANTS FROM THAILAND

This Animal Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (ABPM) provides stakeholders with draft Quarantine Requirements for the Importation of Elephants from Thailand for consideration and comment. The requirements are based on the draft requirements for elephants from Singapore circulated in May 2003. Comments by 18 November 2003 would be appreciated.

ABPM 2003/14 of 15 May 2003 provided stakeholders with information on a proposal by a consortium of Australasian Zoos to import Asian elephants from Thailand, and with draft quarantine requirements for importation from Singapore. Biosecurity Australia had advised the zoos that importation from Thailand should be via Singapore to better manage quarantine risks.

It now appears unlikely that suitable quarantine arrangements will be agreed to allow import from Thailand into Singapore for this project. This memorandum proposes importation from Thailand through Cocos (Keeling) Islands as an alternative.

The draft requirements circulated with this memorandum are similar to those drafted for importation from Singapore and circulated under ABPM 2003/14. These include a 120-day pre-export quarantine (PEQ), during which time testing and treatments are to be undertaken. Biosecurity Australia will recommend to the zoos that source populations be screened for the major diseases of concern, prior to entry to PEQ.

Testing for foot and mouth disease (FMD) is included. FMD is endemic in Thailand and Asian elephants are known to be susceptible; cases have occasionally been reported in India. FMD is regularly reported in cattle, buffalo and pigs in Thailand. We have been unable to find any reports of cases in elephants in that country. The level of reporting suggests elephants are significantly less susceptible than artiodactyls and it is considered most unlikely that infection in elephants persists. There is no evidence that they play any role in transmission of disease to livestock. Nonetheless, testing is specified as a precaution. It is proposed that primary testing for FMD in Thailand be by virus neutralization test (VNT). If results are equivocal, further testing may be conducted.

It is proposed that the animals be held on Cocos (Keeling) Islands for 3 months. This is in accordance with Office International des Epizooties (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code recommendations (Article 2.1.1.9.) for importation from FMD-free countries or zones. This measure alone is likely to ensure negligible risk of introduction of FMD virus. Combined with negative serology during PEQ, the risk will be further reduced. Testing for infectious disease will only be required on Cocos (Keeling) Islands if there is an identified need for it arising from clinical incidents or other unforeseen circumstances.

Next Steps

We would welcome your comments on this Memorandum and attached draft conditions by 18 November 2003.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should get in touch with the contact officer.

Confidentiality

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to ABPMs will be publicly available. Comments may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the Memoranda. The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

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