



Department of
**AGRICULTURE
FISHERIES &
FORESTRY -
AUSTRALIA**



5 June 2002

ANIMAL BIOSECURITY POLICY MEMORANDUM 2002/28

QUARANTINE REVIEW: ASTERIOD SAMPLE

This Animal Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (ABPM) seeks stakeholder comment on a quarantine review relating to a small amount (a few grams) of an asteroid sample into Woomera Prohibited Area in Australia as part of the MUSES-C space mission (Attachment A). Comments would be appreciated by 30 June 2002.

Biosecurity Australia has undertaken a quarantine review in response to a formal access request from the Japanese government to bring a small amount (a few grams) of an asteroid sample into Woomera Prohibited Area in Australia as part of the MUSES-C space mission. The launch is expected in December 2002 and the recovery occurs around June 2007. This quarantine review is being coordinated in consultation with Environment Australia.

A detailed risk assessment, entitled "*Evaluating the biological potential in samples returned from planetary satellites and small solar system bodies*" has already been undertaken by the United States (US) National Research Council (NRC). Because detailed risk analyses into sample returns from planetary satellites and small solar system bodies have already been undertaken, the primary role of this quarantine review has been to review and adapt these risk analyses, as appropriate, to ensure Australia's quarantine concerns are addressed.

Factors considered in the review include:

- . whether liquid water, energy sources or organic matter, which are necessary for life, are present on the asteroid
- . extremes of temperature and radiation exposure on the asteroid
- . any evidence of life forms in meteorites
- . the likelihood of an extraterrestrial life form surviving in an Earth environment.

Although Biosecurity Australia considers the overall risk of adverse effects from the returned sample to be extremely low to negligible, more information is necessary to accurately determine the risks. Until such additional information is available, risk management procedures, including containment of the sample and appropriate environmental clean up in the event of a breach of the sample container, are considered prudent.

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Next steps

You are invited to comment on this quarantine review. Your response by 30 June 2002 would be appreciated. We will take your comments into consideration when finalising the review.

I would be grateful if you would pass details of this advice to other interested parties, who should advise Biosecurity Australia if they wish to be included in future communications on this matter.

Confidentiality

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to Animal Biosecurity Policy Memoranda will be publicly available and 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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