

95/890  
18 April 2000

## **ANIMAL QUARANTINE POLICY MEMORANDUM 2000/22**

### **FINALISED INTERIM CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPORTATION OF DISABILITY ASSISTANCE DOGS**

This Animal Quarantine Policy Memorandum (AQPM) advises interim conditions for the importation of disability assistance dogs by disabled persons from approved rabies free countries and territories and from approved countries in which dog-mediated rabies is absent or well controlled.

Draft interim conditions for the importation of disability assistance dogs by disabled persons were circulated for comment as AQPM 1999/72 on 22 October 1999. AQIS received responses from ten stakeholders. There was general support for the proposed conditions although two stakeholders raised concerns about the muzzling of dogs. These concerns have been addressed (see below). All comments were considered in finalising the attached conditions (Attachment A). Stakeholder comments and AQIS's response is at Attachment B.

After consideration of comments and further extensive consultation with the operational areas of AQIS, it was decided to reproduce these conditions as stand-alone documents rather than as a supplement to the existing conditions for the importation of dogs. These are 'interim conditions' that will be reviewed as part of the import risk analysis (IRA) reviewing current import policy for dogs and cats (see AQPMs 1999/19 and 1999/53). AQIS is aware that New Zealand has commenced a review of its quarantine conditions and we intend to exchange disease and risk management information before finalising our analysis. The interim conditions will provide for disabled people to bring dogs into Australia at the time of the Paralympics.

The fundamental requirements of the proposed conditions circulated in October remain, ie they were designed to allow disability assistance dogs to serve their period of post-arrival quarantine under quarantine surveillance rather than confinement in a government quarantine station.

Documentation in relation to the person's disability and the training of the assistance dog is still required and that, together with copies of appropriate laboratory reports, vaccination certificates and veterinary certificates must be forwarded to AQIS prior to shipment for the import to proceed.

The dogs will have to remain at an approved 'Nominated Address' while not in use and will be required to be under the direct control of the disabled person at all other times.

The disabled person will be required to make a declaration that they agree to comply with the conditions of quarantine surveillance.

One significant change from the proposed conditions for disability assistance dogs from approved countries in which dog mediated rabies is absent or well controlled is to require rabies neutralising antibody testing to have been completed at least 6 months prior to shipment of the dog to Australia. This means that the dog need no longer be considered a rabies risk at the time of arrival, and measures such as muzzling and the reporting of incidents that might theoretically lead to the transmission of rabies are not necessary.

The attached conditions come into effect immediately. There are two protocols; one for import from approved rabies free countries and territories, including approved rabies free island countries and territories, and one for import from approved countries in which dog-mediated rabies is absent or well-controlled.

### **Confidentiality**

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1982*, all submissions received in response to Animal Quarantine 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.

Thank you for your assistance in developing the interim conditions.

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## STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES

Stakeholder comment	AQIS response
Three stakeholders supported the proposed conditions without further comment.	No action required.
No objections to the principles. The issue of public liability of dogs leaving nominated premises was raised.	Noted.
Suggested more accurate wording in one section.	Accepted.
In general, no objections but sought requirements that their Department be informed of bites or illness, treatment or death.	Addressed via requirement for pre export vaccination treatment and testing.
Supported conditions and advised on non-discriminatory treatment in dealing with people with disabilities (ie advice, forms, etc).	Noted.
Considers AQIS initiative is a 'valued concession' and sought changes to proposed requirements for muzzles.	The requirement for pre export vaccination treatment and testing removes the need for muzzles.
Applauds all proposals except the wearing of muzzles. Commented on discrimination in favour of the disabled.	The requirement for pre export vaccination treatment and testing removes the need for muzzles. Quarantine treatment of other dogs will be considered in IRA on dogs and cats.
Recommended extension of these concessions to others in the community requiring companionship in terms of therapeutic value (ie documented chronic physical or emotional disorders).	Noted. Quarantine treatment of other dogs will be considered in IRA on dogs and cats.