## Introducing the Containment Verification TeamOp Ap Newsletter.jpg

**Feb 2017**

The Containment Verification (CV) team works closely with Border Clearance Services, but sits in a different directorate within MPI. We are a relatively small team with specialist inspectors based in Auckland, Hamilton, Hawkes Bay, Wellington and Christchurch supporting a number of staff around the country. All inspectors have warrants under the Biosecurity Act and are also designated as New Organism Enforcement Officers under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act to enforce provisions for new organisms held in containment facilities (CFs). Consequently, we mainly work at CFs but also inspect some transitional facilities (TFs) that receive live animals, animal products or sea containers as part of their business.

In addition to TFGEN, there are seven other regularly used TF standards that facilities may also be approved to. Under these standards, facilities could deal with the import of live animals, animal products (for further processing), biological products, fish and plants. The CV Team takes a lead in verifying compliance for these. In broad terms, CFs receive, hold and work with unwanted organisms and new organisms that are not intended to ever be released into New Zealand. Because MPI has sole responsibility for enforcing the new organism provisions of the HSNO Act, it needs suitably qualified and warranted inspectors for this responsibility.

CFs are mainly research/teaching organisations or analytical/diagnostic labs. They cover a wide spectrum of places and activities, including all zoos holding exotic animals, through to labs holding and working with genetically modified organisms. The TFs included in our inspection scope could be receiving things like cats and dogs, tropical fish or plant quarantine material. Recently, a new animal products standard was introduced for animal product processing requirements. This has seen a lift in manual and traceability requirements for these facilities – most are currently working their way through this transition.

Anyone interested in learning more about the work of the CV Team and the nature of their work should contact Mike Aitkenhead (mike.aitkenhead@mpi.govt.nz) or Barry Wards (barry.wards@mpi.govt.nz). They are happy to discuss common work areas and take interested observers to facilities they supervise.



## From the Frontline: Introducing Mike Aitkenhead

I initially joined the old MAF Quarantine services 13 years ago after having been a quarantine facility operator for a number of years and have been with the Verification Services (VS) area of MPI since 2013. In my current role, I inspect both transitional and containment facilities and, in conjunction with Specialist Advisor Barry Wards, we provide advice and guidance to VS inspectors operating in this space.

We interact with TF stakeholders at a number of levels, such as meeting with operators during inspections and fielding enquiries directly from them. We also provide clarification around MPI expectations directly to stakeholders, and we interact and keep close ties with industry bodies among a range of different sectors.

My advice to TF Operators is to talk to your local inspector so MPI can ensure compliance, as we are here to help. We see a lot of different ways of doing things and can provide advice or suggestions on who to talk to if an operator is having problems. Biosecurity is a team effort and communication is important. Outside of MPI I enjoy travel and fishing. However, with the current summer Wellington is having, the fishing here has been disappointing.

## AP Contamination Reporting of Pests – Fax Ceasing on 1 July 2017

As mentioned in the previous See Contain Report (Nov 16), MPI is phasing out the faxing of hardcopy log sheets to the Target Evaluation Team for processing. By 1 July 2017, MPI will receive all contamination reporting from APs via the Container Checks Portal (<https://containerchecks.maf.govt.nz/Default.aspx>). Remember that APs only need to send MPI a record when they actually find contamination or live pests such as insects (especially stink bugs) and spiders and have dealt with the interception or called MPI (**0800 80 99 66)**. There is no requirement to send MPI container log sheets where no contamination is found – these just need to be kept on file by the TF Operator. This transition period will allow enough time for businesses and APs to be trained and have technology available to access the container website. For any queries, please contact Target Evaluation Team Manager Dunja.Hassencamp@mpi.govt.nz

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## Know the Enemy: Spotted Wing Drosophila

The spotted-wing drosophila (*Drosophila suzukii)* is a vinegar fly originally from southeast Asia. It is becoming a major pest species in America and Europe because it infests fruit early during the ripening stage. It is small (2-3.5mm) with a yellow/brown body with darker bands on the abdomen, and it has red eyes. The male has a distinct dark spot near the tip of each wing (hence the name); however, females do not have this spot.

The female pierces the skin of ripe fruit and deposits a clutch of eggs. The larvae grow inside the fruit creating a blemish. This may exude fluid that could cause an infection. This makes the fruit soft and unmarketable.

The Spotted Wing Drosophila is a serious horticultural pest that could cause major economic impact through control costs, production impacts and market access implications. In New Zealand, this would impact summer fruit crops such as apricots, blueberries, cherries, grapes, nectarines, peaches and other fruits. In 2008, some areas in the USA recorded losses up to 80% (depending on location and crop).

**If you see anything that looks like this pest or anything unusual, please catch or spray it, shut the container and call MPI on 0800 80 99 66 or your local MPI office as soon as possible.**

## Accredited Person – Updated Process

We have been fielding a lot of questions about the new training requirements for Accredited Persons (APs) who work at TFs. The following will hopefully provide the rationale and clarity about the new requirements. MPI policy is that a prospective AP must complete a training course, and achieve a qualification of ‘competent’, with an MPI-approved training provider in order to be able to apply for a statutory appointment to become an AP. Upon successful completion of the training course, the candidate will be required to submit to MPI an application for appointment as an AP (at <http://www.mpi.govt.nz/importing/border-clearance/transitional-and-containment-facilities/facility-operators-and-accredited-persons/>), along with proof of identification and proof of training. These changes are legal requirements to be appointed as an AP. The appointment is valid for two years, after which time, re-training and/or re-assessment of competence must be completed. The big change from the past is an increase in training frequency from four years to every two years.

This change mainly affects APs whose certificate of approval expires between Jan 2019 and July 2020. Certificates for APs trained between Jan 2015 and July 2016 with a four-year expiry period will be revoked by MPI. In their place, MPI will issue new certificates with a two-year expiry date from the date of training upon submission of the new appointment application and proof of identification to MPI. The certificate will be issued within five working days of approval being granted.

APs who trained between Dec 2012 and Dec 2014 (and have a four-year expiry on their training certificate) will retain their existing expiry dates. At their next retraining, they will be issued certificates with a two-year expiry date. They are still required to submit the new appointment application and proof of identification to MPI to update our records and to enable the reissue of certification. Due to feedback, the original due date of 16 December 2016 has now been **extended to 31 March 2017.** Failure to submit an application form will result in MPI revoking the approval of the AP. If you have any questions, please contact SeaContainer@mpi.govt.nz.

## Accredited Person Certificate – Notification to the Individual

The above changes to the AP Application Process has meant that MPI is now required to issue the AP certificate directly to the AP (to their address supplied on the Application Form) rather than sending the certificate to the TF Operator or company. This change has been questioned by some TF Operators as it differs from what has been done in the past. Therefore, it is now up to the AP to provide a copy of their certificate to their TF Operator.

## TF Approval Certificate – Linked to the TF Operator

The updated system means all TF approval certificates will now be linked to your TF Operator expiry date. Therefore, when your TF Operator training expires, our system will automatically suspend your TF. This means operators need to send MPI their certificate of training prior to expiry, otherwise your TF will not be able to receive containers (once operator training expires).

## Low Container Volumes – For New TF Applications Only

MPI now considers container volumes when approving new TF applications. **Note that this change does not affect existing TFs**. This change is because TF Operators and staff who process low volumes of goods each year can find biosecurity requirements to be burdensome or confusing. This can lead to compliance issues and disproportionate costs for MPI. Although all TF applications will be considered, MPI is unlikely to approve an application for a new TF if the applicant will receive fewer than 10 containers a year. However, special requirements will be taken into consideration. For example, if you are importing equipment that requires specialised handling or have specialised gear to unload a container.

## Recent Finds: Geckos at a Transitional Facility

Two live geckos were found at a TF that provides international air freight services. They were both captured and identified as Asian house geckos (*Hemidactylus frenatus*), which are not found in New Zealand but are commonly associated with human dwellings and are abundant in urban areas overseas. These are non-venomous and harmless to humans but may bite if distressed (although this is gentle and will not pierce skin). The biosecurity risk in this case was mitigated by humanely euthanising both lizards.

## Annual Facility Fee

Last year, we stated that MPI planned to send the facility fee invoices ($298.05) at the start of the financial year. However, a system upgrade meant that this was delayed. MPI Financial Services will now be sending out the 16/17 facility fee invoices in February 2017. Note that it is planned to send out the 17/18 financial year facility fee invoice in July 2017.

## Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) Update

MPI continues to be on high alert to stop this pest from establishing in New Zealand. This summer MPI targeted high risk ports (in Italy and the USA) and commodities that present a higher risk for BMSB interceptions. MPI has intercepted some BMSB thanks to the dedication and vigilance from many people, from importers to APs and our own teams. MPI has been able to act quickly, fumigate appropriately and ensure this threat has been kept at bay. As well as increased targeting, we have been working to build greater public awareness about the pest, using digital advertising, print ads aimed at gardeners and social media. Please continue to provide assistance as the end of the season approaches. Without your help, it would be much harder to keep this dangerous pest out of New Zealand.

## Biosecurity Partners – Expressions of Interest

A Request for Proposal (RFP) for AP and TF Operator training providers or ‘Biosecurity Partners’ will be placed on the Government Electronic Tenders Service (GETS) website (<https://www.gets.govt.nz/ExternalIndex.htm>) on 22 February. There will be a panel briefing in mid-March in Auckland which will provide an opportunity to ask any questions about the RFP for those interested in applying.

**If you have any comments or questions, please contact us: Chris Denny (****chris.denny@mpi.govt.nz****) or Dave Nendick (****dave.nendick@mpi.govt.nz****).**

**Alternatively email MPI at** **seacontainer@mpi.govt.nz** **if you have any comments or questions about APs or TFOs.**

## MPI Contact Details

* General Inquiries: 0800 00 83 33
* Biosecurity Import Clearances: 0800 22 20 18
* Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline: 0800 80 99 66
* International Caller Number: 64 04 894 0100
* TFs & Containment Facilities go to: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/trans>

To subscribe to MPI announcements go to <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/lists>