

What happens to your imported goods?

Source: BIOSECURITY AUTHORITY OF FIJI

Last Sunday's article by the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) looked at biosecurity requirements for travelling passengers as of and the risks of pests and diseases that can be introduced to Fiji through some of the goods they bring in with them.

This week BAF will look at another important aspect of border quarantine which is importing of goods or cargo to Fiji and the biosecurity risks and requirements associated with importing cargo.

Every year, thousands of containers of cargo arrive in Fiji from all over the world. Any could potentially introduce an exotic (foreign) pest and disease into Fiji. The pests, weeds, seeds, and other unwanted organisms may hitch-hike undetected with the imported goods, either on or in the shipping container, or in the goods themselves. Pests such as the giant African snail or the Asian gypsy moth not only destroy our environment and agricultural industry but can also affect our agricultural exports and economy.

As such the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) has a number of requirements that ensure the compliance pathway for cargo arriving in Fiji and preventing entry of exotic pests and diseases into Fiji. Biosecurity attends to the clearance of cargo for commercial importation, personal importation including personal effects and household effects to Fiji, through sea and air including international mails and parcel posts.

Biosecurity procedures for sea containers

Declaration in cargo manifest – the cargo manifest declaration is one of the most important and the first requirement for importing cargo as it helps BAF to conduct risk profiling on the manifest to ascertain which cargo needs biosecurity inspection. This declaration is sent 48 hours prior to the vessel's arrival and contains information such as container number, origin (where the container was packed), name and address of exporter and importer and a complete and accurate description of the contents, including packaging and treatment certificate (if applicable) etc.

Inspection of containers- shipping containers are essentially transport mediums for exotic pests, diseases and other contaminants such as soil etc. Insects can hitchhike to Fiji attached to the sides or surfaces of containers or located in small corners or tiny cracks on a shipping container. Hence inspection of the exterior of the container is conducted first for pest infestation and or contamination by soil while the containers are being unloaded at the wharf. If a pest or contamination is found, it is removed or treated before the container can proceed for further inspection or clearance.

Inspection of goods- Biosecurity officers also inspect the goods, packing and the interior of the container for pests and other contamination such as soil. The inside of the container is also a very good hideout for pest insects as well as small animals. On one such occasion biosecurity officer found a live cat inside a sea container.

In addition to inspecting the containers, the biosecurity officers also inspect that imported goods and ensures that the goods are safe and free from harmful pests and diseases. The officers verify the relevant documents required to import the particular product to Fiji such as the import permit, Phytosanitary certificate for import of all plant and plant products and veterinary certificate for import of all animal and animal products, treatment certificate, and transhipment permits etc before clearing the consignment.

Import permit ensures that biosecurity risks are managed offshore. If the import conditions outlined in the import permit issued by BAF is not complied with and all required documents are not present then BAF will take appropriate biosecurity action which could be detaining the goods, treating or destroying it. However, if the import conditions are met then the goods would be released. Biosecurity treatment for imported goods includes fumigation, steam cleaning and spraying.

Inspection of timbers used in packing- BAF also requires that all timber used for packing in shipping containers is Interna-

tional Standards for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15 (ISPM 15) certified. ISPM 15 is an International Phytosanitary Measure developed by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) that directly addresses the need to treat wood materials of a thickness greater than 6mm, used to ship products between countries. Its main purpose is to prevent the international transport and spread of disease and insects that could negatively affect plants or ecosystems.

Wood packaging material such as pallets, crates, dunnages etc could contain some of the world's most dangerous beetles such as Khapra beetle, Asian longhorned beetle or Wood Borer and if introduced in Fiji it could have devastating effects on our environment.

Inspection of empty sea containers

A great majority of containers used in Fiji for exports are either owned by the maritime shipping companies or container leasing companies and as such a large number of containers used to exports goods from Fiji return to the country as empty containers. BAF also inspects these empty containers for pests as the empty containers lying idle in importing countries become a good hideout for insects and small animals that can easily stowaway to Fiji when these containers return home.

The exterior of all empty containers returning to Fiji from importing countries are inspected for pests such as insects and snails or soil while it is being unloaded from the vessel while internal inspection of the container for insects/ seeds/grains/timber and soil is done after the container has been offloaded.

If the container is clean and not infested with pest or contaminated then it is released to its owners, however, if it is infested or contaminated then it is washed and cleaned thoroughly or fumigated with methyl bromide before being released.

Vehicles and machinery

All machineries and vehicles entering Fiji are also inspected by BAF for soil, plant material, insects or other contamination and if contamination is found then the machines and the vehicle will be washed, steam cleaned or fumigated with methyl bromide before release.

Moving to Fiji- what you need to know

If you are moving to Fiji as a returning resident or new resident you should know the biosecurity requirements of moving your household goods.

- **Packing list** - all shipments of personal belongings should be accompanied by a detailed inventory listing all items in the consignment. This will help BAF assess the risk status of the container.

- **Declare all biosecurity restricted items**- any contents that are classified as biosecurity restricted items such as plant and plant products and animal and animal products like fresh fruits and vegetables, live plants and bulbs, restricted seeds, live animals, biological products etc must be declared.

- **Clean your goods**- before packing, BAF requires that that any items that have been in contact with food, soil, plants, animals, or their products like all used equipment and machinery, garden furniture, tools, waste bins, broom, vacuum cleaners and fresh water equipment etc is thoroughly cleaned and free from any contamination.

- **Do not use used packing boxes**- do not use any used boxes for packing or those that have already been in contact with an organic substance such as cartons, used previously with fruit, meat, eggs, flowers or pot plants or fertiliser bags. Also do not use straw, sawdust, wood shavings or any other plant material as packing or filler.

- **Proper labelling and numbering of packed boxes**- It is important that you properly number and label your packed boxes so that it matches with the numbers on the packaging list.

How can you clear your goods

through Biosecurity?

You can clear your goods yourself or you can use a freight agent or representative. Biosecurity Officers will examine your packaging list for items of biosecurity concern. Items of potential biosecurity risk will require an inspection. Following inspection, if nothing of biosecurity concern has been found, your goods may be released but if items of biosecurity concern are found then your options would include either treating the item (if suitable treatment is available), destroying it or re-exporting the item back to the country of origin.

Biosecurity and international mail

BAF screens all incoming international mails for the potential introduction of exotic pests and diseases to Fiji through the postal system, while facilitating the movement of mail. One of the most smuggled items in international mails is seeds which present a very high biosecurity risk as it can introduce exotic diseases and weeds which can threaten our native plants, forest and agriculture.

All mails are screened by x-ray at the international mail centres for pest infestation.

BAF also restricts or prohibits receiving of certain items through mails. Some of this includes food, seeds, plant cuttings and soil, herbs and spices that could contain pests, plant based medicines, wooden articles with borers, tissue cultures, animal products such as bees, honey, semen, eggs, serums, canned meat, dried meat, noodles and preserve insect specimens.

It is important for people to know what can or can't be mailed to Fiji as mails found infested with pests or with restricted or prohibited items would be retained by BAF either for treatment (if applicable) or destroying it or re-exporting to the country of origin. People found breaching biosecurity requirements for mailing could also face fines

High risk pests found in imported cargo

Below are some of the pests that can be found hitch hiking or stowing on or in cargo containers, and that we definitely don't want getting into Fiji.



Giant African snails which were to a with container from Wallis and Futuna.

1. Giant African Snail

The giant African snail is said to be one of the most damaging agricultural pests in the world. The giant African snail can grow to over 30cm in length, eat over 500 different species of plants and can lay more than a thousand eggs each year. This pest could enter Fiji in empty containers or bags, under packing cases, pallets, in or on shipping containers, machinery or motor vehicles. A giant African snail is often intercepted at Fiji ports however BAF has so far kept this pest out of Fiji through vigilance and careful inspection of all imports.

2. Asian Gypsy Moth

The Asian gypsy moth is a bad forest pest insect. It eats the leaves of more than 500 different species of trees and shrubs and causes enormous damage to the environment and the economy. This moth can also enter Fiji on ships, containers and cargoes and a major outbreak of Asian gypsy moth in Fiji has the potential to destroy forests and native bush,



Asian gypsy moth

trees, crops and the communities that depend on them. Biosecurity Officers inspects ships that are at high risk of transporting this pest.

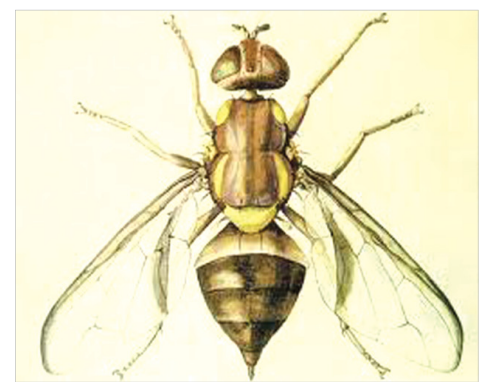
3. Red Imported Fire Ant



Red imported fire ant.

Red imported fire ants (RIFA) is a highly invasive and destructive species of ant. It is more aggressive than most native ant species, and has a painful sting. It can also damage plant roots leading to loss of crops. They are also a threat to small animals such as birds. As well as inspecting ships and their cargoes, biosecurity officers also maintains a surveillance system to provide early warning of the potential entry of invasive ants.

4. Exotic Fruit Flies



Exotic fruit fly.

Exotic fruit flies present in many of our neighbouring countries pose high risks to our agricultural industries and could devastate many of the crops we rely on for our food and economic well-being.

The most likely way for exotic fruit flies to enter into Fiji is in infested fruit. All commercial imports of fruits and vegetables are disinfected or are certified as being grown in a fruit fly free country or region. BAF maintains a system of fruit fly traps across Fiji. At present there are a total of 389 fruit fly traps in 166 sites around Fiji. These traps have been set up to check if any new species are entering the country.. Some of the sites include Suva, Nausori, Sigatoka, Nadi, Rotuma, Tailevu, Naitasiri, Taveuni, Lomaiviti, Lau and Vanua Levu.

5. Other pests

Other pests such as wasps, rodents, spiders and other types of snails are also frequently intercepted on sea containers coming to Fiji.

Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility and we should all work together to keep our country free from harmful exotic pests and diseases.