

A Guide to Tasmania's Biosecurity System

There are many pests, weeds and diseases on mainland Australia that are not here in Tasmania (i.e. they are exotic to this state). Our freedom from these introduced threats is a great benefit to our primary industries, to the various allied industries that support them, to our natural environment and to our lifestyle.

This fact sheet is a basic guide to the way Tasmania's biosecurity system works to protect the State's freedom from these pests, weeds and diseases.

1. Identifying the biosecurity risk

Firstly, there is no such thing as "zero risk". For as long as produce and animals come across Bass Strait, tourists visit and Tasmanians return home from the mainland, there is some risk of these exotic pests, weeds and diseases "hitching a ride" into Tasmania. In addition, some pests, weeds and diseases could be brought into the state by airborne insects or wild birds.

Assessing the level of biosecurity risk is a process that involves a review of the current scientific knowledge about the particular pest, weed or disease – how it spreads, what climate suits its establishment, and what plant or animal species it affects are a few examples of the review process. A full explanation of how Biosecurity Tasmania (within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment – NRE Tas) [undertakes import risk analyses is available on our website](#).

In short, the level of risk is the product of two factors. One is the likelihood of the pest, weed or disease getting here. The other is the scale of the consequences if that were to happen. These two factors are combined to indicate a level of risk ranging from "extreme" to "negligible".

2. The "Appropriate Level of Protection" or ALOP

As there is no such thing as "zero risk", there can be no such thing as total protection against the risk of an exotic pest, or disease.

Under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement, each jurisdiction can determine what level of biosecurity risk they are willing to take and, based on that, what is the "Appropriate Level of Protection" (ALOP) they need to have to achieve that level of risk.

Our freedom from many pests, weeds and diseases is an essential component of the renowned Tasmanian brand. On this basis Tasmania has determined that our ALOP is one that accepts only a "very low risk" in relation to the biosecurity threat from pests, weeds and diseases. On an international scale, this is classed as very conservative.

If an import is assessed as being a "very low" biosecurity risk, it already satisfies our ALOP standard and therefore is allowed into Tasmania with only minimal restrictions. Examples of this include new gardening equipment, new farm machinery, new veterinary equipment, hardwood timber products, dried nuts, cats and horses.

By way of example Tasmania imposed an emergency ban on horse and horse gear imports during the outbreak of equine influenza on the mainland in 2007, but these conditions were eased and then eventually removed as the outbreak was controlled and eradicated.

If an import is assessed as being a risk that is greater than "very low", then that risk will have to be reduced to "very low" if it is to be granted entry into Tasmania.

This is known as “risk mitigation”. Mitigating a biosecurity risk to “very low” can be achieved by various means. They include (but are not limited to);

- chemical treatment before arrival;
- evidence that the import has come from an area known to be free of the pest or disease in question;
- in the case of used machinery, a thorough wash-down, preferably before arrival;
- in the case of animals, a period of quarantine before (or sometimes after) arrival;
- in the case of animals, a veterinarian’s certificate that the animal is free of diseases exotic to Tasmania

The Import Risk Analysis lists the various options that would mitigate the risk so that it is reduced to the “very low risk” standard needed to satisfy Tasmania’s ALOP.

In some cases, the Import Risk Analysis will state there are no viable means of mitigating the risk to “very low”. In these cases, the import is prohibited. There are no circumstances where an import that is a biosecurity risk higher than “very low” is allowed into Tasmania without mitigation.

Once the mitigation options are identified, Tasmania is then obliged, under WTO rules, to use the measures that are least restrictive to trade. This means that, where there are several ways of mitigating the biosecurity risk down to “very low”, the least trade-restrictive must apply.

The formal requirement for importers to mitigate the level of biosecurity risk down to “very low” is achieved by establishing what is known as an “import requirement” (for plants or plant products) or an “entry requirement” (for animals or animal products).

3. Import Requirement (for plant and plant products)

Some Import Requirements (or “IRs”) relate to a particular pest, weed or disease - e.g., fruit fly, grape phylloxera etc. In these IRs, the host species (i.e. the plant species that are capable of carrying the pest or disease) are listed.

Other IRs relate to a particular import – e.g., potatoes, nursery stock, seeds for sowing, agricultural equipment etc.

Each IR spells out the conditions that must be met before the import is allowed into Tasmania and what evidence needs to be presented to satisfy Biosecurity Tasmania that the treatment, inspection etc. has been completed appropriately. All IRs are published in the [Plant Biosecurity Manual Tasmania \(PBMTas\)](#) – available on the Biosecurity Tasmania website. The Manual includes a table that makes it easy to find a particular type of import and the associated IRs.

Plants or plant products that are allowed into Tasmania without a specific Import Requirement must still meet the general import requirements – in particular, they must be free of soil, correctly labelled and the packaging must be intact.

4. Entry Conditions (for animals and animal products)

Many animal species are allowed into Tasmania without having to meet specific **Entry Conditions**, providing they are healthy and free of any weed seeds in their hair/fur.

Some species of animals are prohibited from entering Tasmania. They include some fish species, wildlife species, including foxes. There are many animal species that may be imported provided they meet the Entry Conditions established to mitigate the biosecurity risk down to “very low”.

The published lists also include entry requirements for various livestock species. In most cases, an entry requirement involves veterinary inspection and clearance, or some form of health certification before arrival. In most cases, sheep, goats or alpacas with fleeces must be shorn or have short fleeces before they arrive. [You can find more information on importing animals into Tasmania on the Biosecurity Tasmania website.](#)

5. The biosecurity barrier

All imports of plants, plant products, animals and animal products must be presented for inspection by Biosecurity Tasmania at the biosecurity barrier. This may be at an airport, seaport, and ferry terminal or mail exchange.

Where an import does have a specific Import Requirement or Entry Condition, it is the responsibility of the importer to ensure that the conditions are met and the necessary documentation is complete.

Where an import arrives at the Tasmanian biosecurity barrier without satisfying the conditions for entry, Biosecurity Tasmania has a number of options to manage that biosecurity risk. The options include destruction of the import, sending it back at the importer's expense or treating it at the importer's expense. Failure to meet these conditions may also result in an on-the-spot fine being imposed.

6. The Australian biosecurity system

Tasmania's biosecurity system is about minimising the risk to Tasmania of those pests and diseases that are on the mainland – but are not found here in Tasmania.

In most cases, Biosecurity Tasmania does not conduct import risk analyses, or have Import Requirements or Entry Conditions for pests, weeds and diseases that are exotic to the whole of Australia. Where the task is to minimise the risk of these pest, weeds and diseases coming into Australia, this is undertaken by the Commonwealth Government – more information is available on the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources website (www.agriculture.gov.au/import).

When imports arrive in Tasmania from overseas, there is an agreement which authorises Biosecurity Tasmania staff to act on behalf of the Commonwealth Government.

Further Information

This fact sheet is a quick summary of the Tasmanian biosecurity system. If you are intending to import plants or plant material, animals or animal product into Tasmania, Biosecurity Tasmania has comprehensive information available on its website at www.nre.tas.gov.au/biosecurity; including a range of [informative facts sheets](#).

If you are planning to import plants or plant product, the [Plant Biosecurity Manual Tasmania, or PBMTas](#), provides comprehensive information on those Import Requirements.

The [Tasmanian Biosecurity Database \(TBD\)](#) search facility, planned to be available through the Biosecurity Tasmania website, will be another very useful resource for importers.

If you are planning to import animals, (including fish, birds or insects), you will find [the necessary information on our website](#).

Please further information please phone **1300 368 550** (for the cost of a local call Australia-wide), or email Biosecurity.Tasmania@nre.tas.gov.au

Disclaimer: While all care has been taken to ensure that information contained in this fact sheet is true and correct at the time of publication, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania gives no warranty or assurance, and makes no representation as to the accuracy of any information or advices contained in this publication, or that it is suitable for your intended use. No business or investment decisions should be made in reliance on this information without obtaining independent/or professional advice in relation to your particular situation.