



Inspection of Frozen Germplasm

Notification of commencement of physical verification of imported frozen germplasm on arrival in New Zealand

Background

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) have several import health standards (IHSs) in place that allow the importation of frozen germplasm (semen and embryos) into New Zealand. Currently these IHSs include the importation of germplasm from horses, cattle, dogs, sheep, goats, pigs, deer and alpacas. Each consignment of germplasm must be accompanied by veterinary certification that confirms that the biosecurity requirements in the relevant IHS have been met.

On arrival in New Zealand the germplasm is held at the place of first arrival (PoFA) in a transitional facility until the accompanying documentation has been checked and the external seals on the transport tanks have been examined and confirmed to match the documentation. Following these checks, the consignment may be given a biosecurity clearance and moved from the transitional facility.

In cases where the documentation is non-compliant, or the product requires further testing, the importer may, under MPI supervision, top up the liquid nitrogen, remove compliant germplasm, or remove certain straws or vials from the consignment to send for further testing. The consignment may be moved to another transitional facility approved to hold germplasm for this to take place.

While MPI does not have evidence of biosecurity concerns about previous consignments, there have been some questions raised about labelling and the integrity of tank seals and certain germplasm containers. MPI considers it prudent to undertake a level of inspection to verify the germplasm is labelled, packaged, and transported in accordance with the documentation, and provide assurance that the current system is working effectively.

Physical verification of randomly selected germplasm consignments to start 1 August 2020

A 12 month trial for physical verification of germplasm will recommence on 1 August 2020. (The inspections were started in March but put on hold due to COVID travel restrictions).

Frozen germplasm is stored in liquid nitrogen and requires specialised handling equipment, knowledge, and has health and safety implications. Inspection of germplasm will be undertaken under the direct supervision of an MPI Inspector, but due to health and safety issues with handling liquid nitrogen and deleterious effects of inappropriate handling, it is necessary that the importer or agent handle the germplasm and equipment. The importer or agent must also provide the necessary equipment for the inspector to clearly view the sample's label out of the transport tank, in a separate bath of liquid nitrogen.

Of the consignments of frozen germplasm being imported into NZ, MPI will randomly select 10% for inspection (with the exception that all consignments containing sheep semen pellets will be inspected). Fresh canine and equine semen is excluded due to the short shelf life of these commodities and laboratory animal germplasm is also excluded.

The importer will be notified if their consignment has been selected for inspection when they submit their documentation and airway bill through Trade Single Window and receive a BACC response.

The importer will need to make an appointment with the inspector at a mutually convenient time for the physical verification to take place. (Contact your local MPI office to make an appointment [MPI Local Office Contacts](#)). If the importer would like the inspection to be carried out at a facility other than the PoFA, that request must be made at the time of application or by resubmitting the request via TSW.



The importer will need to make sure they have access to a transitional facility with appropriate approvals before they import any germplasm. They must ensure that the necessary equipment is available, and that they (or their agent) are onsite to handle the commodity at the time of inspection.

A statistically valid sample will then be randomly selected from the tank for verification of packaging and identifiers against the accompanying documentation. The minimum number of units inspected from the consignment will be 60 straws or vials, or the entire consignment if it contains 60 units or less.

In the event of non-conformances during inspection, a complete inventory may be required and a second appointment may be necessary.

Transitional Facility approval

Selected consignments of germplasm must be held in an approved transitional facility until biosecurity clearance is given. The facility may be at the PoFA transitional facility, usually Menzies or Air New Zealand in Auckland or Christchurch. These facilities have approval for holding all product types and have approved inspection areas. This means that if the importer is able to travel to one of these places, the inspection can be carried out there.

If the importer wishes to use an alternative transitional facility they will need to ensure the facility is appropriately approved and has adequate inspection areas that are approved for the purpose of inspecting germplasm. The *Operating Manual* of the facility will need to include the following information relating to holding and inspecting germplasm (see section 3.10 of the [Standard for Transitional Facilities for General Uncleared Risk Goods, TFGEN](#) for further details):

- A specific area or room of sufficient size set aside for inspection of risk goods
- Adequate lighting for commodity and document inspection
- Not subject to unsuitable temperatures, well ventilated
- Contains a bench or hard surface for ease of inspection
- An effective and accurate record system maintained by the facility operator
- Secure

Currently there are approved facilities at:

Auckland Airport
Christchurch Airport
Palmerston North, MPI Inland Port
Hamilton (privately operated TF).

Costs

All fees and calculation guidelines, are outlined in the [Biosecurity \(Costs\) Regulations 2010](#). A list of rates specific to inspections can be found at the following link: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/importing/overview/fees-and-charges-general/>

Further associated charges can be found at the following link: <https://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/importing/border-clearance/transitional-and-containment-facilities/fees-and-charges-for-transitional-and-containment-facilities/>



Key points

- Physical inspection of germplasm requires the outer container be opened and the identification of the straws/vials to be verified against accompanying veterinary certification.
- 12 month trial period will commence **1 August 2020**.
- 1 in 10 consignments will be selected for inspection (All consignments containing sheep semen pellets will be selected).
- 60 straws/vials will be physically verified from the consignment.
- Inspection must be carried out in a transitional facility approved to [Standard for Transitional Facilities for General Uncleared Risk Goods, TFGEN](#) (approval for live animals, germplasm only).
- Specific approval will be required for the transitional facility to hold germplasm and there will need to be an appropriate inspection area available.
- It is the **importer's responsibility** to ensure they have **access to a suitably approved transitional facility prior to import**.
- The importer or their agent must be available to handle the germplasm and provide all necessary equipment and cryogenic agents.
- An appointment will need to be made with the transitional facility inspector to arrange a suitable time for both the importer and the inspector.
- The importer is responsible for arranging and paying for transport of the consignment to the nominated transitional facility.
- The importer is responsible for paying for the inspector's time and travel to the facility in accordance with the [Biosecurity \(Costs\) Regulations 2010](#).

Questions?

Please contact animal.imports@mpi.govt.nz if you have any questions regarding germplasm inspection.

For transitional facility approvals or information about existing facilities contact the biosecurity inspector at a location convenient to you: [MPI Local Office Contacts](#).