



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

MEDIA RELEASE

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HOTTEST TECHNOLOGY ENGAGED IN FIRE ANT FIGHT

Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson has officially launched a \$9.8m state-of-the-art Biosecurity Information Management System as part of the NSW Government Agriculture Industry Action Plan.

The system delivers on one of the priority actions set out in the NSW Agriculture Industry Action Plan launched last year - to invest in a world class biosecurity information system to protect markets.

Minister Hodgkinson said the system is being deployed in the field for the first time in response to the red imported fire ant detection at Port Botany.

“The team on the ground at the Local Control Centre have been the first to engage the State’s new \$9.8 million Biosecurity Information Management System (BIS) during a full scale biosecurity emergency response,” Minister Hodgkinson said.

“The staff and volunteers involved in the current response to red imported fire ant detection at Port Botany are setting the standard for biosecurity emergency responses into the future.

“The new cloud-based system was developed to enhance the State’s capacity to deal with biosecurity threats and emergencies. It geospatially tracks surveillance teams, minimises duplication and data entry time, and has been particularly valuable for mapping the extensive surveillance carried out following the red fire ant detection.

“The response so far has been exceptionally efficient, professional, collaborative and in particular innovative.

“This new tool allows surveillance teams to log in to the system and submit crucial, real-time data, including photos, so staff in labs and control centres can be continually informed updated on the response and deploy additional resources where required.

“It has exceeded our expectations and while it is being used successfully in daily operations by the Department of Primary Industries, its full potential and benefits are realised during an emergency response,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“NSW is driving and developing this technology, and already our colleagues in Queensland have expressed interest in modelling their system on ours.”

Minister Hodgkinson also praised local businesses and residents for their vigilance and cooperation.

"We have received over 350 calls to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline with people reporting suspicious ants, which have thankfully been assessed to be negative for fire ants," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"While it appears that the detection is isolated to the one site, it is crucial that people remain vigilant and experts will be carrying out the next round of targeted baiting treatment at the detection site this week."

"The specialised prophylactic baiting will be undertaken across more than 100 hectares of land around the detection site this week to ensure any stray ants are baited and eradicated.

"Experts from Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will be on hand carrying out this latest round of specialised baiting.

"Following this week's baiting activity, the Local Control Centre will stand down, but the Department will continue to work with Local Land Services to monitor the situation at Port Botany and investigate any reports of suspect ants and conduct further rounds of baiting.

"A full Local Control Centre will be reopened in June to resource another extensive residential and port surveillance campaign later this year."