

## Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance

# Developing Biosecurity awareness and upskilling resources for NSW Rural Fire Service and volunteer fire fighters

The Biosecurity & Food safety Compliance team assisted NSW RFS with increasing skills, knowledge and awareness of biosecurity responsibilities, during fire operations in NSW.

The resulting training and education event was operationalised into contextual scenarios to better explain the principles of shared responsibility, and how their biosecurity risk can be mitigated during fire responses and other incidents to prevent the spread of pests, diseases and weeds across the state.

### Background

In late 2020, the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), approached Biosecurity & Food Safety (BFS) Compliance seeking assistance to develop Biosecurity centred information resources for their Squadrons made up of RFS personnel and volunteers.

### What we did

The project came about following discussions surrounding biosecurity responsibilities including the General Biosecurity Duty, and how legislation can be followed during responses to

unplanned (fire emergencies), or planned (load reduction burn-offs, harvest responses, and non-fire related emergency responses) activities when responding to bush fires and other incidents across the State.

Senior members of the RFS were taken through a bespoke *Biosecurity Act* training session designed for Authorised Officers, but tweaked towards fire response scenarios, pests, diseases, and weeds spread occurring through the movement of people, machinery and appliances, and Biosecurity zones.

Take home messages, together with operational scenarios were further developed into operationally focussed print materials for awareness and upskilling and by RFS members and volunteers as a part of the biosecurity principle of shared responsibility.

### What was produced?

Earlier this week, an operational brief, and two fact sheets were released, and we couldn't be prouder to be involved in such a rewarding exercise.

It makes for a very interesting read, and if you are part of a local brigade or squadron, please feel free to communicate these resources to your team members.

## 1- NSW RFS Operational Brief

**NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**

# OPERATIONAL BRIEF

BIOSECURITY | JUNE 2021

The NSW Rural Fire Service has been working with members, the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), Local Land Services (LLS) and NSW Farmers to understand our biosecurity responsibilities when responding to bush fires and other incidents across the State.

The Biosecurity Act came into force in 2017, streamlining the duty to prevent or minimise the risk for any pest, diseases, weeds or other contaminants of concern to protect our human health and food production. This is a **shared responsibility** across the community. The NSW RFS is committed to ensuring members understand this **shared responsibility** and undertake response activities with an awareness of the biosecurity requirements that may apply.

Two Fact Sheets - **Landholder Biosecurity** and the **Biosecurity Act 2015** have been developed to assist members in considering biosecurity implications for planned and unplanned activities.

**Biosecurity**

Our **shared responsibility** for biosecurity means protecting our economy, environment and community from any negative impacts, such as to human health or food production.

that can occur when any pest, diseases, weeds or other contaminants of concern is spread or introduced. This can occur through the movement of people, machinery and appliances.

There are several Biosecurity Zones that impact large parts, or the entirety of the State, which members need to consider when planning activities such as hazard reduction or during signi icant bush ire operations such as Strike Team deployments.

The guiding principle **Come Clean, Go Clean** has now been adopted by the NSW RFS which is outlined in the Landholder Biosecurity Fact Sheet.

To support these Fact Sheets, related policies and protocols are being reviewed and updated to reflect our **shared responsibility** for biosecurity.

**Peter McKechnie**  
Deputy Commissioner Field Operations

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE - OPERATIONAL BRIEF - BIOSECURITY - JUNE 2021 | 1 of 1

**NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**

# BIOSECURITY ACT 2015

JUNE 2021

**Biosecurity defined**

A key focus of the Biosecurity Act 2015 (the Act), is managing biosecurity risks - prevention, mitigation and management, when and if they occur.

- ▶ Biosecurity refers to all measures taken to "minimise the risk of infectious diseases caused by viruses, bacteria or other microorganisms entering, establishing or spreading in Australia, to animals and plants, potentially harming the Australian population, food security and economy".
- ▶ A biosecurity risk is a risk that exists when dealing with any pest, disease or contaminant. Something that could carry a pest, disease or contaminant (e.g. animals, plants, soil, equipment - known as 'carriers').
- ▶ Biosecurity provides policies and practices to prevent the unintentional or accidental release of specific biological agents and toxins, whereas Biosecurity provides policies and practices to prevent the intentional or negligent release of biological materials or the acquisition of knowledge, tools, or techniques.
- ▶ Being Biosecure means:
  - ▶ Taking steps to prevent pests, diseases and weeds spreading to new areas;
  - ▶ Keeping an eye out for pests, weeds and signs of disease; and
  - ▶ Reporting anything unusual.

**Legislation**

The Act came into effect 1st June 2017, and is about "managing diseases and pests that may cause harm to human, animal or plant health or the environment" in Australia. It is a major reform of the Quarantine Act 1908, now clearly defining the operational functions, making them easier to use and administer. The main changes are related to the compliance and enforcement of powers.

The Act delivers a single, cohesive, legislative framework for the prevention, elimination, minimisation and management of biosecurity risks in NSW. There are a number of legislative instruments made under the Act, including the Biosecurity Regulation 2017.

**Shared responsibility**

The Act supports the vision that biosecurity is a shared responsibility between government, industry and the people of NSW working together. It is an enabling piece of legislation that utilises a number of tools and powers regardless of what or where the risk is, and whether it is known or newly emerging.

Governments at the national, state and local levels have important roles to play in biosecurity risk management. NSW is a signatory to a number of national agreements that outline the roles and responsibilities of government and detail how those responses will be funded.

In NSW, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is the government agency that takes the lead on biosecurity activities, with the establishment of Local Land Services (LLS) in 2014, providing an important link in the delivery and implementation of biosecurity strategies, particularly at a regional level.

**General biosecurity duty**

The Act requires that anyone who knows or ought reasonably to know, about a biosecurity risk has a duty to prevent, eliminate or minimise that risk as far as reasonably practicable. If you are in NSW and you deal or undertake an activity with biosecurity matter and/or a carrier, you have a "shared responsibility" or obligation to manage the biosecurity risk associated with that activity. This responsibility is referred to as your General Biosecurity Duty.

While undertaking roles within the NSW RFS, there may be a General Biosecurity Duty, that we must be seen to take steps to discharge or mitigate.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE - BIOSECURITY ACT 2015 FACT SHEET | 1 OF 5

## Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements go to the NSW RFS and their senior team members for providing the opportunity to assist, and for chaperoning the materials through the approval process. DPI management across The Emergency Management and BFS Compliance for driving this initiative, and the training staff involved in tailoring the materials to the RFS audience.

INT21/78575

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2021. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (June 2021). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.

## 2- Fact Sheet- Landholder Biosecurity

**NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**

# LANDHOLDER BIOSECURITY

JUNE 2021

A key focus of the **Biosecurity Act 2015** (the Act) is the management of biosecurity risks - prevention, mitigation and managing them when and if they occur.

The Act includes a general biosecurity duty - this means that everyone must do what is reasonably practical to prevent or minimise biosecurity risk that they know about.

**Landholders**

**Managing the biosecurity risk of people visiting or entering land.**

Biosecurity risks such as pests, diseases and weeds are a threat to agricultural and horticultural properties. All biosecurity risks can spread through the movement of animals, people, machinery and vehicles.

It is good practice for landholders to have a Biosecurity Management Plan (Plan) that identifies these risks that may come onto their property. This includes circumstances where NSW RFS members may have a right of access or right of carriage. In their plan, landholders should identify and consider the specific risks to the property and outline reasonable measures that must be followed to prevent, eliminate or minimise the impacts posed by people, vehicles and any equipment entering the property.

It is essential that landholders place signs at each entrance to the management or high-risk areas where the Plan applies.

**NSW Rural Fire Service**

**Supporting landholders and biosecurity.**

In order to provide firefighting and associated services across NSW, the rights of the NSW RFS to access land are protected by the Rural Fires Act 1997.

In order to achieve the best outcomes for landholders:

- ▶ Landholders should recognise the needs and rights of the NSW RFS to access their land; and
- ▶ NSW RFS members should respect the landholder's need to manage biosecurity and comply with reasonable measures outlined in the Plan.

**Shared responsibility**

**Working together to manage biosecurity risks.**

Wherever possible and for all planned visits, NSW RFS brigades should contact the landholder in advance to notify of their intention to enter so that steps can be taken to manage any specific biosecurity risks. Practical exceptions exist, where notification may not occur, this includes emergency situations.

**VISITORS**

A Biosecurity Management Plan (the Plan) applies to this place. Please to comply with the Plan may be an offence under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.

Please phone or visit the office before entering to obtain a copy of the Plan or to discuss your obligations.

DO NOT ENTER WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL. Vehicles, people and equipment may carry weed seeds, pests and diseases.

Figure 1 - Example of a property sign

Figure 2 - NSW RFS crew working on vineyard

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE - LANDHOLDER BIOSECURITY FACT SHEET | 1 OF 2

## 3- Fact Sheet – Biosecurity Act 2015