

## Biosecurity - Aquatic pests and diseases – responding to reports

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### Management of the biosecurity risk

The purpose of this procedure is to detail how the NSW Government will manage aquatic biosecurity in relation to prohibited matter, notifiable pests and diseases and other biosecurity events.

### Scope

The Act promotes biosecurity as a shared responsibility between government, industry and the community. This procedure is a State Priority for NSW and applies to the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), an office within the NSW Department of Industry, and Local Land Services (LLS). It should be read in conjunction with the policy 'Aquatic Biosecurity Pests and Diseases'.

This procedure covers management of significant aquatic pests and diseases that include marine vegetation, marine and estuarine and freshwater fish. This procedure also includes management of the potential emergent freshwater pest diatom didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*).

This procedure excludes mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and any other animal excluded from the definition of *fish* under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* or regulations made under that Act. Freshwater pest plants or weeds are also excluded from this procedure. Reports of algal and cyanobacterial species (collectively considered as "toxic algae" species) impacting on water quality will be forwarded to the NSW Office of Water. Reports of fish mass mortality incidents where significant aquatic pests or diseases are not believed to be the cause are to be forwarded to NSW DPI Fisheries and, where pollution is thought to be a factor, also to the Environmental Protection Agency.

### Biosecurity legislation summary

A number of aquatic pests and diseases are notifiable under schedule 1 of the Biosecurity Regulation 2017. This means that a person who owns or is in charge of aquatic animals or marine vegetation, or a person working with aquatic animals or marine vegetation in their professional capacity, has a duty to notify an authorised officer within one working day if they suspect, or are aware of aquatic pests and diseases.

A number of other aquatic pests and diseases are listed as prohibited matter under schedule 2 of the Act. This means that a person who owns or is in charge of aquatic animals or marine vegetation, or a person working with aquatic animals or marine vegetation in their professional capacity, has a duty to immediately notify an authorised officer if they suspect, or are aware of aquatic pests and diseases.

Examples of who the 'duty to notify' applies to include:

- people who own aquatic animals or marine vegetation, such as hobbyists in the case of ornamental fish, and
- people who own or are in charge of commercial facilities that house aquatic animals or marine vegetation, and

- recreational and commercial fishers who have caught fish that they know or suspect to be diseased, and
- veterinarians and other professionals consulted about aquatic animals or marine vegetation.

Recreational divers and other people who know or suspect the presence of an aquatic pest or disease are also encouraged to notify.

Under section 28 of the Act it is an offence for people to deal with prohibited matter. In the context of aquatic pests and diseases, this means that it is an offence for people to do anything that is described in section 12 of the Act as dealing with which includes moving, selling or treating aquatic animals or marine vegetation infected with aquatic pests or diseases, unless the person could not have reasonably known that they were dealing with aquatic pests or diseases. Note that the Secretary (or delegate) can issue a prohibited matter permit that authorises specific dealings with prohibited matter, such as aquatic pests or diseases, subject to specific conditions.

In the case of an outbreak of an emergency aquatic pest or disease, the Secretary (or delegate) may issue an emergency order under section 44 of the Act. This would declare a biosecurity emergency and establish measures to respond to that biosecurity emergency.

The collection, use and disclosure of information in accordance with this procedure, including any internal or external discussion or distribution of information, must be in compliance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* or be exempted by the operation of section 387 of the Act.

Section 387 (2) of the Act provides authority for the disclosure of information about a person, without the consent of the person: to a public sector agency, or to any other person, but only if the disclosure is reasonably necessary for the purpose of exercising a biosecurity risk function.

### **Work health and safety**

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* places an obligation on the agency (NSW DPI and LLS) as a person conducting a business or undertaking and workers to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Safe Work Method Statements that support activities included in this procedure must be used in identifying, assessing and controlling risks.

NSW DPI and LLS will work together to create a safe and supportive work environment when undertaking any activities for this procedure.

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# Responding to reports of aquatic pests and diseases

## 1. Roles and responsibilities

### 1.1 NSW Department of Primary Industries

- the NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity Risk Management team and other Animal Biosecurity and Welfare unit staff will undertake the preparedness, reporting, investigation and response activities as per this procedure
- NSW DPI Fisheries staff will report cases of suspect or confirmed aquatic biosecurity prohibited matter, notifiable pests and diseases and other biosecurity events to the NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity Risk Management team.

### 1.2 Local Land Services

- LLS staff will report cases of suspect or confirmed aquatic biosecurity prohibited matter, notifiable pests and diseases and other biosecurity events to the NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity Risk Management team
- LLS staff will participate in emergency aquatic biosecurity responses.

## 2. Notification and reporting

### 2.1 Receiving a report

A person (as defined by the Act) that suspects or is aware of a notifiable aquatic pest, disease or event has a biosecurity duty to notify an authorised officer. A reporting service has been established by the NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team (the ABRM team) for aquatic pest and disease reports, available as a 24-hr telephone recorded hotline: (02)49163877. Alternatively, the ABRM team can be contacted by email at [aquatic.pests@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:aquatic.pests@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and via [online web forms](#). Direct contact can also be made with ABRM on (02) 4982 1232.

2.2 Responsibilities for NSW Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services staff: Staff working for NSW DPI or LLS must report any information regarding suspicion or awareness of a notifiable aquatic pest, disease or event to an authorised officer who works in the ABRM team.

An authorised officer who works in the ABRM team must verbally report any information regarding suspicion or awareness of a notifiable aquatic pest, disease or event to the NSW DPI Strategy Leader of the ABRM team.

#### 2.2.1 Content of the report:

The report from the authorised officer that passes along the reporting chain must include:

- the species affected (including the number affected and number at risk)
- full name and contact phone number of the owner, person in charge (or person reporting)
- details of the suspected event
- the location of the event (including the PIC if the event is on a property with a property identification code), and
- the date of the first known or suspected case.

Other details and intelligence relevant to the aquatic report should also be collected such as water quality and other environmental conditions. High quality photographs should also be taken where possible.

Further details for authorised officers in the ABRM team about gathering details for the report are outlined on the Port Stephens server G:\Aquatic Biosecurity\Admin\Reporting\Pest & disease reports & inquiries.

### **2.3 Responsibilities of the NSW DPI Strategy Leader of the Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team:**

If the Strategy Leader of the ABRM team (or delegate) receives a report which they consider indicates suspicion report which in their opinion has a medium to high likelihood of being prohibited matter or a biosecurity event must report immediately, verbally and by email to the:

- NSW Chief Veterinary officer (CVO) and/or NSW Deputy Chief Veterinary officer (DCVO)
- Local NSW DPI Fisheries Office
- LLS Manager Biosecurity & Emergency Services of the affected region/s.

### **2.4 Responsibilities for the NSW DCVO/CVO:**

The NSW DCVO/CVO (or their delegate) will notify positive results for a prohibited matter cases to the:

- NSW DPI DDG Biosecurity and Food Safety
- NSW DPI DDG Fisheries
- NSW DPI Manager Public Affairs
- NSW Health
- The Australian Chief Veterinary Officer
- Consultative Committee on Introduced Marine Pest Emergencies
- Invasive Plants and Animals Committee
- Freshwater Fish Expert Group
- Sub-committee on Aquatic Animal Health and
- Aquatic Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases.

At the discretion of the DCVO/CVO, reports which are not confirmed, but have a medium to high likelihood of being prohibited matter may also be communicated to the above reports within 24 hours of a suspect report being received.

### **2.5 Record keeping:**

An authorised officer who works in the NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team will enter gathered information of the report into the Aquatic Pest and Disease Reporting Database and keep this updated as the investigation progresses.

## **3. Investigation and alert phase**

### **3.1 Report evaluation**

The NSW DPI (Strategy Leader Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team) evaluates the significance of the report by conducting an internal risk assessment with ABRM. In the case of suspicion of prohibited matter or a biosecurity event, the report should also be evaluated in accordance with the “Response action tool for prohibited matter pests and diseases of animals and biosecurity events”.

The report evaluation will indicate the requirement for an investigation, and potential urgency of an investigation. The evaluation should take into account:

- the level of mortality or morbidity
- suspicion that the pest or disease is listed in legislation (as prohibited matter or a notifiable schedule 1 pest or disease, or
- presence of the suspected pest or disease in a waterway/s where it is not known to previously occur
- if the suspect pest or disease is endemic to the area, or
- if the suspect pest or disease is potentially new or emerging, or is presenting in a new species, or
- the incident involves illegal activities.

### 3.2 Investigation plan:

The NSW DPI authorised officer will make recommendations regarding an investigative plan with the Strategy Leader and Manager, NSW DPI (Animal Biosecurity Strategy and Standards). The investigative plan may range from urgent investigation to no further action (or further monitoring).

The investigation plan may include:

- collection of samples
- delimitation surveys
- active surveillance, and

laboratory or technical investigation to identify, confirm or exclude a notifiable aquatic pest, disease or event. The investigation plan should also be developed with reference to the relevant surveillance procedure) and in the case of suspect prohibited matter or biosecurity event, the procedure: "Prohibited matter pests and diseases of animals – investigation and alert phase".

### 3.3 Laboratory sample collection

- NSW DPI (Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team) may coordinate the collection of representative samples, in line with:
  - Aquatic disease investigation manual (INT16/48742);
  - Oyster sampling protocol (INT16/130340); or
  - Finfish sampling procedure  
[http://www.scahls.org.au/Procedures/Documents/AQANZSDP/FinFish\\_Sampling.doc](http://www.scahls.org.au/Procedures/Documents/AQANZSDP/FinFish_Sampling.doc).

### 3.4 Sample submission

- the Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team identifies an appropriate facility to undertake identification or diagnosis and organise transit of samples to this facility, for example:

Type of testing required	Laboratory or Institution
Disease	Regional Veterinary Laboratory Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute Woodbridge Rd Menangle NSW2568 Ph: (02) 4640 6327
Marine pest and vegetation identification	NSW DPI Fisheries Aquatic Ecosystems Principal Research Scientist, Marine Ecosystems Ph: (02) 4982 1232
Freshwater pest identification	NSW DPI Fisheries Aquatic Ecosystems Research Leader, Freshwater Ecosystems
Taxonomic expertise	Port Stephens Fisheries Institute Ph: (02) 4982 1232 The Australian Museum Ph: (02) 9320 6000 (General Enquiries)

Courier	Contact	Location
Metrostate Couriers	Ph: (02) 4964 4315	Port Stephens/Newcastle area
Metrostate Couriers	Ph: (02) 9645 9700	Sydney & for regional contacts

### 3.5 Communication/ distribution of laboratory results for prohibited matter

NSW DPI Laboratory Services maintains a live distribution process document that contains the contact details for distribution of laboratory results, and will notify results for notifiable pests and diseases as per the procedure 'Reporting Notifiable Pests and Diseases of Animals'.

### 3.6 Initial results

Laboratory results will help inform the progression of a response or the decision that further testing and investigation is warranted (for example further testing may be required when the results are equivocal or further investigation is required).

## 4. Operation and response

### 4.1 Response plan

A response plan will be developed for each response by NSW DPI (Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team):

- relevant response procedures (including national disease plans under AQUAVETPLAN) for key biosecurity threats can be referred to and are listed in section 8 (Documentation)
- response options can include:
  - eradication:
    - if the pest population or disease is reasonably contained.
  - containment:
    - where the pest population or disease cannot be eradicated
    - this may include measures such as movement restrictions or the use of control orders.
  - ongoing management:
    - if the pest or disease cannot be eradicated or contained.

### 4.2 Responsibilities for NSW Department of Primary Industries staff

If a response is undertaken (for example following positive confirmation of prohibited matter) NSW DPI (Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team) are responsible for:

- drafting and updating briefing documents to inform the Executive and seek endorsement for proposed management options;
- drafting Situation Reports
- selecting management options that are specific to the pest or disease and the circumstances of the environment in which they have been detected. These may include:
  - surveys to quantify and delimit extent seeking further expertise and external advice
  - establishment of an internal expert working group
  - establishment of an incident management team (through the Emergency Response unit of NSW DPI)
  - identification of resources to allow for recommended response, and
  - development of media points with the NSW DPI Communications unit, and
- if confirmed to be an emergent biosecurity threat, the Executive, Legal Branch and ABRM will consider the addition of the pest or disease in legislation.
  - management options can then be considered.

## 5. Definitions and acronyms

Aquatic pest	as per 'pest' definition in <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> , yet referring to animals included in the definition of fish under the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> , and to marine vegetation
AVG	Abalone viral ganglioneuritis
Biosecurity matter	as per definition in Section 10 of the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>
CVO	NSW Chief Veterinary Officer
DDG	Deputy Director General
Disease agent	as per definition in NSW <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>
Fish	as per definition in the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i>

LLS	Local Land Services
NSW DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
POMS	Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome
Prohibited matter	as per definition in NSW <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>
SCAAH	Sub-Committee on Aquatic Animal Health
Stakeholders	includes (but not limited to), water users, vessel owners or managers, aquaculture operators, research scientists, mooring contractors, barge operators, fishing clubs and persons who deal in or with aquatic matter

## 6. Documentation

Policy - Aquatic biosecurity pests and diseases  
 Policy – Principles for management of animal biosecurity and welfare in NSW  
 Policy - Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information  
 Policy -Records Management (IND-I-177)  
 Policy - Information Security (IND-I-197)  
 Policy - Classified Information (IND-I-196)  
 Policy -Government Information (Public Access) (IND-I-178)  
 Procedure - Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information  
 Procedure - Aquatic fieldwork hygiene  
 Procedure - Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome incursion response  
 Procedure – Responding to carp fishing and control enquiries from external stakeholders  
 Procedure - Prohibited matter pests and diseases of animals – investigation and alert phase  
 Laboratory submission form  
[http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/agriculture/vetmanual/submission/specimen-submission-form?SQ\\_ACTION=login&a=587016](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/agriculture/vetmanual/submission/specimen-submission-form?SQ_ACTION=login&a=587016)  
 Ornamental fish update  
<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/pests-diseases/freshwater-pests/ornamental-fish/update>  
 Make 'Clean' Part of your routine factsheet  
<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/pests-diseases/marine-pests/stop-the-spread/clean-routine>  
 Don't dump that fish  
 Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome response plan  
 Abalone Virus Ganglionneuritis response plan  
*Fisheries Management Act 1994*  
*Biosecurity Act 2015*  
[AQUAVETPLAN – disease strategy manuals](#)

## 7. Records

Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management Pest and disease reporting database:  
 G:\Aquatic Biosecurity\Admin\Reporting\Pest & disease reports & inquiries  
 Monthly Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management statistical report (INT16/94062)

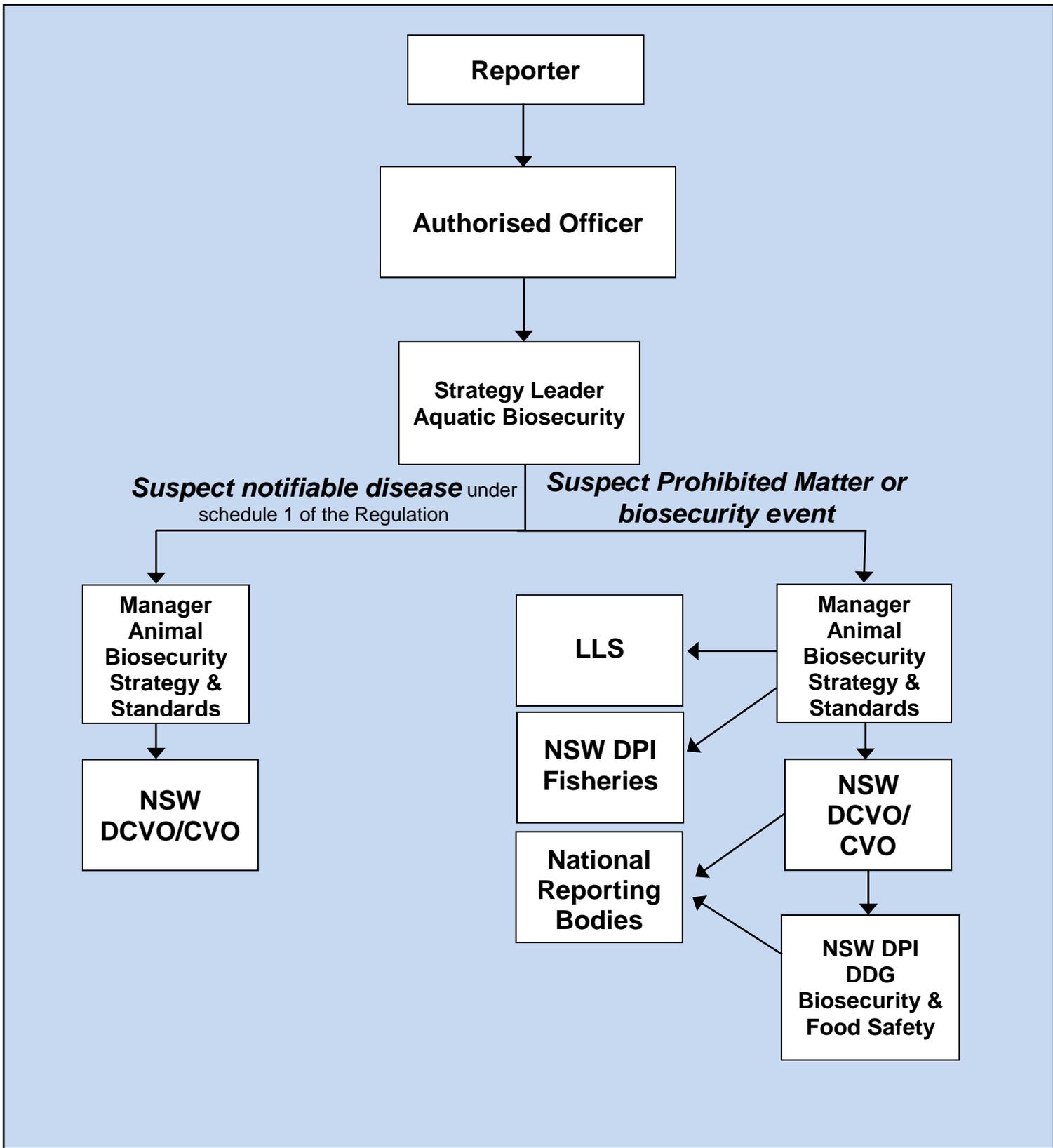
## 8. Revision history

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
1	01/07/2017	New policy developed in response to the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> .	Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management team

## 9. Contact

Biosecurity NSW – General Enquires  
 1800 808 095  
[biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

Appendix: Aquatic Communications Pathways



\*Note: Where it is highly suspected that the report may be prohibited matter or notifiable diseases and pests under section 1 of the Regulation, reporting may be from NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity Officer/ Strategy Leader to multiple levels