

Biosecurity – Aquatic biosecurity pests and diseases

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Policy Statement:

This policy details what the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and Local Land Services (LLS) will do to manage the risks posed to economy, community, and environment of NSW by declared and emergent infectious and transmissible aquatic disease agents, freshwater fish pests and marine pests.

Scope:

This policy applies to the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and Local Land Services (LLS), offices within the Department of Regional New South Wales (DRNSW), implementing activities as authorised officers, or to meet other obligations, under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act), as well as roles under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the overarching policy 'Management of animal biosecurity in NSW'.

This policy covers management of significant aquatic pests and diseases that includes marine and estuarine vegetation; marine, estuarine, and freshwater fish as per the definition given in the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (including aquatic invertebrates); and the invasive freshwater diatom didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*). The policy excludes mammals, reptiles, birds, and amphibians. However, staff should be aware of provisions relating to these, such as the need to undertake suitable biosecurity measures for the critically endangered Bellinger River Snapping Turtle for people working in, on, or adjacent to the waters of the Bellinger River and its tributaries. The policy does not include management of freshwater vascular pest plants or weeds. Also excluded are aquatic wildlife incidents where significant aquatic diseases or pests are not believed to be the cause. Fish kills where disease is believed to be the cause are included. This policy also covers supporting development of aquaculture resilience in collaboration with relevant industry sectors through industry biosecurity risk preparedness, with a focus on emergency incident response and recovery.

Animal biosecurity works closely with animal welfare, and all animal welfare legislation such as the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* must be complied with.

Safety Requirements:

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* places an obligation on the agency (NSW DPI and LLS) as an entity conducting a business or undertaking, and on each worker as a person, to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Safe Work Method Statements that support activities included in this policy 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 policy.

Outcomes

1. Aquatic biosecurity threats to NSW are assessed and managed according to a consistent, robust, and systematic decision-making process
 - a. Situational awareness about emerging aquatic biosecurity threats is maintained by NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity Policy and Programs team (NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity)
 - b. The significance of aquatic biosecurity threats is evaluated and prioritised, according to consistent risk criteria
 - c. Resources are allocated to manage aquatic biosecurity threats in accordance with the NSW DPI organisational objectives
 - d. NSW effectively contributes to the development of national aquatic biosecurity policies, programs, and plans
 - e. Management of aquatic biosecurity threats is enhanced by harmonised legislation and cooperation between NSW and other Australian jurisdictions.
 - i. Activities
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity coordinate reports of aquatic pests and diseases submitted via the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease hotline 1800 675 888, aquatic.biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au reporting email, online reporting form and those made directly to NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity, NSW DPI Fisheries or LLS (4.1a)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity coordinate reports of passive surveillance made by stakeholders, industry, and researchers (4.1a)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity lead the development and implementation, with input from NSW DPI Fisheries and LLS, of the procedures that implement this policy. These procedures are underpinned by risk assessments for relevant aquatic disease and aquatic pest issues, surveillance, and response activities (4.1b)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity adopt a risk-based approach to determining the significance of a disease or pest report or incursion to inform an appropriate response, for example to prevent, eradicate, contain, control, educate, or accept the risk as required (4.1c)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity participates in or has active membership on national committees and working groups, for example the Sub-Committee for Aquatic Animal Health (SCAAH), the Marine Pest Sectoral Committee (MPSC) and the Freshwater Vertebrate and Invertebrate Working Group (FVIWG), etc. (4.1d)
 - NSW DPI cooperates with other Australian jurisdictions and, where appropriate, develop harmonised legislation, Memoranda of Understanding with other jurisdictions and implement the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) (4.1e).
2. NSW DPI and LLS activities minimise the incidence and impact of declared and emergent infectious and transmissible aquatic disease agents, freshwater fish pests and marine pests in NSW

- a. Regulatory and advisory activities are available to minimise spread of aquatic disease agents and pests to unaffected fish populations and aquaculture businesses
 - b. Responses to aquatic pests and diseases incidents are supported by a robust response capability
 - c. NSW DPI staff are involved in preparedness activities including training for effective and efficient rapid aquatic biosecurity response
 - d. LLS, the Environment, Energy and Science (EES) Group of Department of Planning, Industry, and the Environment (DPIE), Transport for NSW, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, and other relevant government agencies and aquatic industries are actively engaged with NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity or the NSW DPI Animal Biosecurity unit.
 - e. Impact on market access for NSW producers from aquatic pest and disease agents is minimised
 - f. NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity is engaged in NSW DPI Aquaculture Research, EMAI animal health research and NSW DPI Freshwater Ecosystems, Marine Ecosystems, and Freshwater Environment pest research activities.
- ii. Activities
- NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity or NSW DPI Animal Biosecurity develop procedures, underpinned by risk assessment that clearly define roles and responsibilities for aquatic pests and diseases including for carp, abalone viral ganglioneuritis, tilapia, aquatic fieldwork hygiene, Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS) response, QX disease response, responding to aquatic disease reports, and aquatic (marine, freshwater and disease) surveillance (4.2a)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity collaborate with NSW DPI Fisheries and other internal staff to assist in the development of regulatory importation requirements that focus on minimising the potential introduction of aquatic pest and disease agents into NSW (4.2a) (4.2d)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity develop and maintain response capabilities through training, planning, and participation in responses, to facilitate timely responses to reports of suspected aquatic pest and disease agents (4.2b)
 - NSW DPI and LLS are trained, prepared, and have the capability and resources to respond (4.2b) (4.2c) (4.2d)
 - All of NSW DPI and LLS report cases of suspect aquatic pests and diseases to NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity (4.2b) (4.2d)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity collaborate with other relevant units and agencies, including within NSW DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety and NSW DPI Fisheries, the Environment, Energy and Science (EES) Group of DPIE, Port Authority NSW, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, and Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, to facilitate cross-agency management of aquatic pests and diseases (4.2b) (4.2d)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity collaborate with aquatic industries to facilitate effective Government and industry partnerships in the management of aquatic pests and diseases (4.2b) (4.2d)
 - NSW DPI uses an aquatic pest and disease record keeping system and database to underpin export certification (4.2b) (4.2e)
 - NSW DPI develops and implements risk based and prioritised aquatic pest (marine and freshwater) and disease surveillance, reporting and tracing systems (4.2b) (4.2e)

- NSW DPI inspections and auditing processes inform OIE reporting and Commonwealth audit requests. NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity risk assessments are underpinned by robust scientific evidence (4.2e) (4.2f).
3. Stakeholders are empowered to implement best aquatic biosecurity practices to minimise the incidence and impact of declared and emergent infectious and transmissible aquatic disease agents, freshwater fish pests and marine pests.
- a. Stakeholders promptly notify NSW DPI or LLS of important, suspected, or unusual aquatic animal disease or mortality events and pests
 - b. Stakeholders are informed about biosecurity measures and encouraged to implement biosecurity plans and standard operating procedures to minimise the likelihood of fish becoming infected with declared or emerging aquatic pests and diseases
 - c. Stakeholders adopt biosecurity plans and standard operating procedures that minimise the risk of spread of aquatic disease agents and pests
 - d. Peak industry bodies promote the objectives of this policy to their stakeholders.
 - e. Stakeholders understand their biosecurity duties including their general biosecurity duty in relation to aquatic disease agents and aquatic pests
 - f. Human health risks from zoonotic diseases are communicated to and managed by NSW Health.
- iii. Activities
- NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity develop social research activities to inform improvements to aquatic biosecurity advisory messages and materials that aim to improve aquatic biosecurity behaviours and increase the shared responsibility of aquatic biosecurity by all stakeholders (4.3a) (4.3b) (4.3c)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity work with aquatic industries during times of increased aquatic biosecurity risks to support industries' management of those risks (4.3a) (4.3b) (4.3c) (4.3e)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity develop and distribute (with assistance from LLS and DPI Fisheries) advisory materials to inform stakeholders of biosecurity requirements, best practice, and duties under the Act in relation to aquatic pest and disease management in NSW (4.3a) (4.3b) (4.3c) (4.3e)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity provide feedback and advice on the development of biosecurity management plans and protocols for stakeholders (4.3b)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity attend meetings of relevant industry bodies, committees or working groups where appropriate to provide advice on biosecurity requirements and best practice, including the provision of out of session updates (4.3d)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity provide input into conditions for various permits issued by NSW DPI to ensure that stakeholders are aware of biosecurity obligations relevant to their industry and activities (4.3e)
 - NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity notify and refer information regarding zoonotic issues to NSW Health (4.3f).

Related procedures:

- Procedure – Aquatic animal disease response and recovery: cultured bivalve molluscs (PROC20/23)
- Procedure – Aquatic animal disease response and recovery: cultured crustacean diseases (PROC20/39)

- Procedure – Aquatic animal disease response and recovery: generic aquatic emergency animal diseases (PROC20/38)
 - Procedure – Aquatic fieldwork hygiene (INT17/26050)
 - Procedure – Aquatic pests and diseases – responding to reports (INT16/157683)
 - Procedure – Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information (INT17/83863)
 - Procedure – Freshwater fish incursion response procedure (INT19/170157)
 - Procedure – Management of abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) in NSW (INT21/134456)
 - Procedure – Pacific oyster mortality syndrome (POMS) incursion response (INT17/37416)
 - Procedure – Responding to carp fishing and control enquiries from external stakeholders (INT17/37430)
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Definitions:

Aquatic pest: as per ‘pest’ definition in Act, which are also either marine vegetation, or fish as per the definition of fish under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* or the freshwater diatom didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*). Freshwater vascular plants are excluded from the definition, as are mammals, reptiles, birds, and amphibians.

Aquatic wildlife incidents: including fish kill events, oil spills and other environmental/pollution events with negative impacts on aquatic wildlife

Disease agent: as per definition in the Act

BFS: Biosecurity and Food Safety

DPI: NSW Department of Primary Industries

EMAI: Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute

Fish: as per definition in the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (i.e., includes finfish and aquatic invertebrates, excludes mammals, reptiles, birds, and amphibians)

LLS: NSW Local Land Services

NEBRA: National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement

NSW DPI: NSW Department of Primary Industries

OIE: World Organisation for Animal Health

QX disease: A disease of Sydney Rock Oysters caused by the protozoan *Marteilia sydneyi*

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

POCTA: *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*

Legislation:

Animal Research Act 1985

Biosecurity Act 2015

Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986

Fisheries Management Act 1994

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Government Sector Employment Act 2013

Local Land Services Act 2013

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979

State Records Act 1998

Veterinary Practice Act 2003

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Other related documents:

Policy – Biosecurity – Management of animal biosecurity in NSW (INT20/71412)

Policy – Biosecurity – Chemically affected food-producing animals, animal food commodities and stock food (INT16/122891)

Policy – Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information (INT17/82007)

Policy – Emergency management – DPI/LLS alliance (IND-O-201)

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)

Policy – Surveillance for diseases of animals and aquatic pests (IND-O-220, INT21/98796)

Policy – Work Health and Safety (IND-P-185)

Policy – Code of Conduct (IND-P-184)

NSW Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Strategic Plan 2019-23

Revision history:

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
1.0	01/07/2017	New policy developed in response to the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> .	Animal biosecurity and welfare
2.0	25/05/2022	Minor revision of policy – including update of template, contacts, and minor edits throughout – change in scope to acknowledge that also includes other staff meeting their obligations under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> , not just authorised officers.	Aquatic Biosecurity Policy & Programs team

Contact:

NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity - General Enquiries via the PSFI switchboard (02) 4916 3900 or aquatic.biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au

To report suspicions of prohibited or notifiable matter call 1800 675 888.
