

LORD HOWE ISLAND BOARD

BUSINESS PAPER

OPEN SESSION

ITEM

Lord Howe Island biosecurity update.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

1. Note the Biosecurity update
2. Place on public exhibition for a period of at least four weeks (six weeks if advertised over Christmas) the proposed fee and charges outlined in Table 2 in the body of this report.
3. Following the exhibition period a paper be presented to the Board at the March 2021 meeting.

BACKGROUND

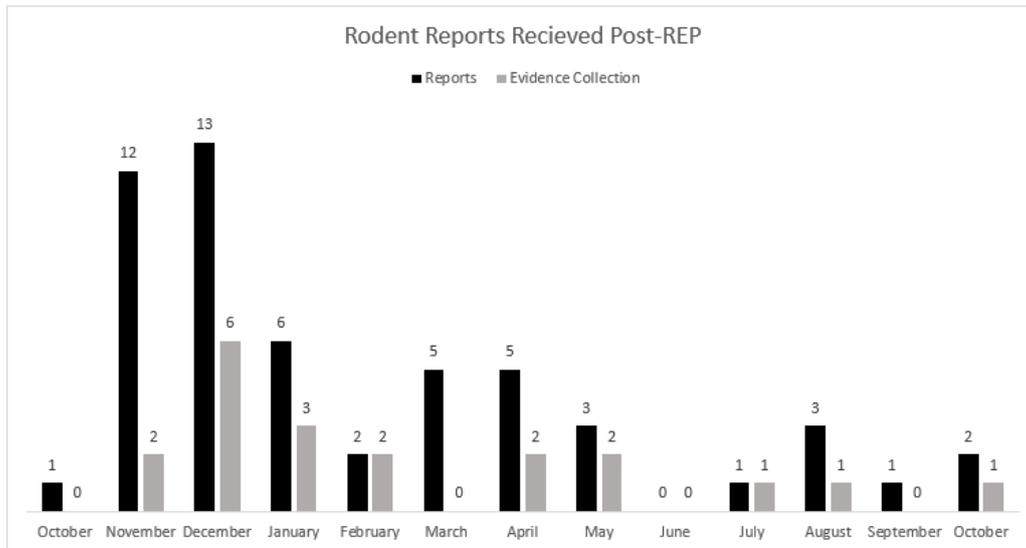
The last positive fresh rodent sign was found on LHI on 9th October 2019. Biosecurity procedures, practices, and resources are in an active update and development phase post rodent eradication. Substantial progress has since been made on improving biosecurity delivery with a strong emphasis on data management in order to better understand biosecurity goals and where vulnerabilities lie.

This update encompasses the period from August – October 2020.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND DATA

1) Rodent sighting/sign reports and follow up.

- 6 suspected rodent sightings/sign reports have been made Aug-Oct 2020.
- Following assessment, 2 reports were progressed to further monitoring/evidence collection activities.



2) Termite Incursion follow-up

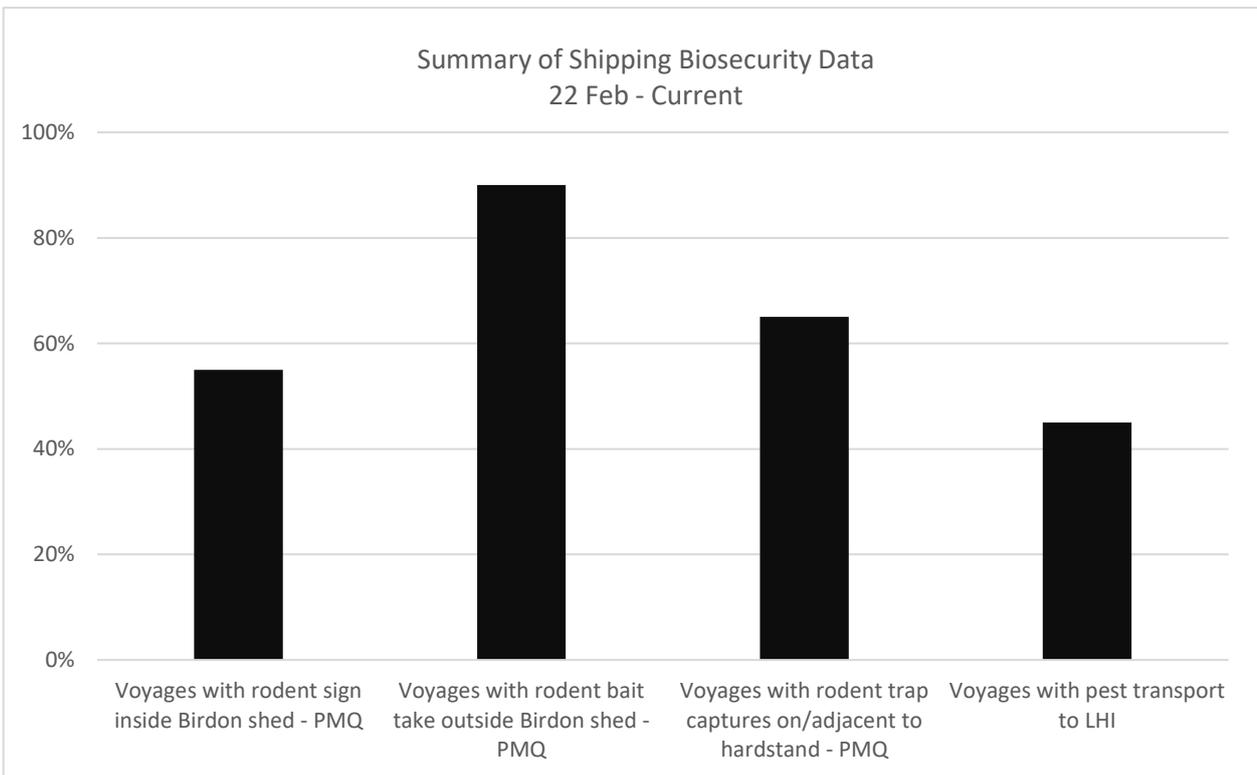
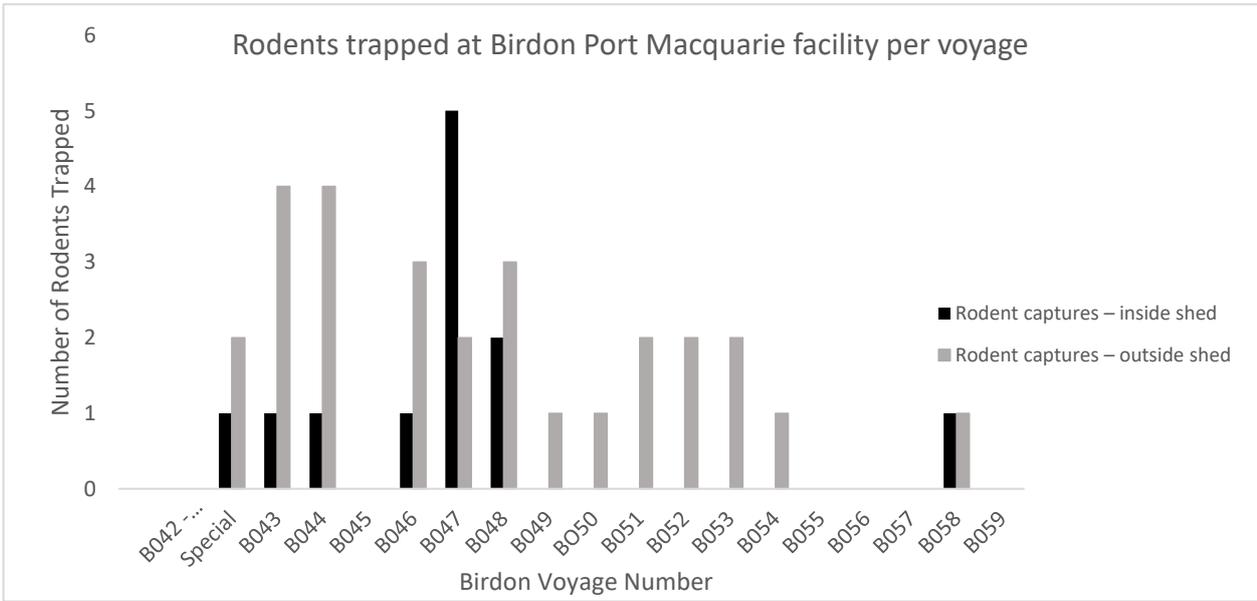
- In early September a species of termite was found on Lord Howe Island that hadn't previously been recorded. This species of potentially destructive termite – *Coptotermes Frenchi* are widely distributed on mainland Australia and are known to damage timber houses and structures.
- Subterranean termites are slow moving and at this stage the main infestation has been deemed to have been controlled
- The biosecurity team has been working closely with the Australian Museum, CSIRO and UWA termite specialist Theo Evans to create a plan for monitoring and eradication of this species from Lord Howe, with our first round of monitoring beginning in ~ 2 weeks; to be checked at 6 month intervals.
- The biosecurity team are also creating a picture of species of termites present on the island and an associated plan to prevent any further incursions. This will include an update (for review) to current policies on importing building material.

3) Arrivals Process has commenced for Vessels and Aircraft

- Vessel Inspections have begun with 7 vessels being inspected in November
- All vessels completed their pre-departure paperwork
- All vessels received an on-arrival inspection by a Biosecurity Officer and Marine Parks
- All private aircraft have been met from September - November and the new process has been working effectively.

4) Shipping

- **Birdon**
 - Discussions have been held with Peter Besseling from Birdon with regard to updating the Birdon Biosecurity Management Plan
 - An inspection at the end of November will confirm completion of the two highest priority biosecurity actions for Birdon (Rodent Proofing and Pallet Racking)
 - Improvements so far have seen a reduction in rodent access and increases our confidence in reaching the goal of shipments being free of biosecurity matter



5) Flights

a) Eastern

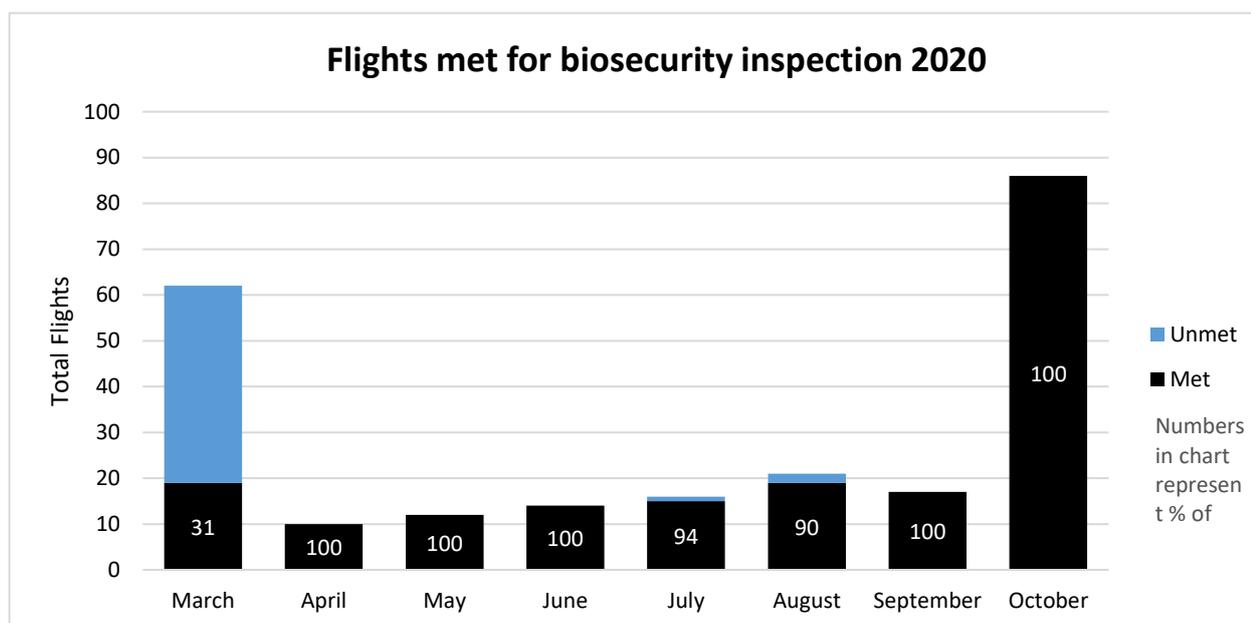
- Eastern Air Services began flights from Newcastle to Lord Howe Island on the 14th November 2020
- Discussions with Matt Berger and Paul McFarlane from Newcastle Airport with regard to Biosecurity practices for Lord Howe have commenced

b) Qantas

- Discussions with Qantas ground crew with regard to Biosecurity practices and configuration of biosecurity checks, which are now being trialed inside the fenced area, allowing passengers to move off the apron quicker have been held

c) Private Flights

- Discussions are underway with local pilots with regards to updated biosecurity practices
- All private flights to Lord Howe have been met by the biosecurity team since the re-opening of the island (2nd October 2020)



6) Suppliers of goods/freight

- Discussion have been held with AusPost with regard to biosecurity standards for mail pods delivered to Birdon for Lord Howe. AusPost have agreed to update storage and cleaning processes in the first instance and discuss updating mail transport and storage options.
- Discussions with our new Port Macquarie Bunnings contact have been held with regard to packaging and biosecurity requirements when shipping to Lord Howe

7) Permanent rodent surveillance network

- Checking, maintenance, and network refinement continues – no significant finds.
- Network has been expanded to include Dawson's Point (due to proximity to yacht moorings).
- A network of monitoring devices has been installed on all walking tracks (except Mt Gower which will be installed in the next few weeks). Initial checks have shown no rodent sign.

8) Capital works update

Biosecurity	Jetty biosecurity inspection room	Construct	\$ 75,000
Biosecurity	Pallet stands	Purchase	\$ 20,000
Biosecurity	Biosecurity airport	Goods	\$ 15,000

- Jetty Biosecurity Inspection Room – A quote is being progressed for the assessed works.
- Pallet Stands – Cantilever pallet stands have been installed at Birdon Port Macquarie.
- Biosecurity Airport – This project has moved forward to quote.

9) Fees and Charges update – Biosecurity

Development of biosecurity related fees and charges

At the September 2020 Board meeting, the Board were presented with draft/concept biosecurity related fees and charges noting that work on the development of these fees and the associated fee structure was in its infancy.

Analysis and recommendations on costs and possible amended fees is presented below.

Visiting Vessels – Yachts and non-commercial vessels

Current resourcing limitations do not allow for all vessels to be met for biosecurity inspection. Providing arriving vessels have completed their mooring application and have demonstrated compliance with the associated biosecurity requirements, vessels are currently met only when resourcing constraints allow. To date, 7 of 7 arrived vessels have been inspected. As vessel visitation numbers increase concurrently with increased flight arrivals (which also require biosecurity inspection), it is anticipated that 25% of arriving vessels may reasonably be expected to be met for inspection annually.

Inspection of 25% of vessels that have been fully compliant with biosecurity actions would provide an indication of the degree of biosecurity compliance and effectiveness of the measures imposed on visiting vessels. Inspections would be prioritised for vessels that are deemed high risk.

As such, implementation of the previously proposed cost recovery 'user pays' structure for those inspections which are able to be conducted is likely to result in some vessels being met and charged, whilst many others (who may reasonably be moored over the same time period) would not be able to be met (and subsequently not charged). This scenario is likely to result in questions as to why some vessels are inspected (and subsequently charged) whilst others are not. In light of this, a new fee structure is proposed.

It is suggested that the cost of the proposed inspection regime is spread across all visiting vessels. These funds would assist with funding the ongoing checks and maintenance of the expanded Dawson's Point rodent monitoring network – this expansion was installed to assist in mitigating the biosecurity risk posed exclusively by vessels moored off Dawson's Point.

An average of 84 vessels arrived each year from 2009-2019. The estimated annual cost to inspect 25% of the arriving vessels and maintain the Dawsons Point monitoring network is

\$7,350. The cost per vessel, when averaged across all visiting vessels is just under \$90 per vessel.

Figure 1 shows the monthly arrival averages for this period. A breakdown of the costs indicates that each individual inspection would cost \$350¹ all inclusive. Table 1 shows a summary of the cost workings).

It must be noted that an inspection rate greater than 25% of vessels is desirable, however a significant increase in inspections would result in a stepwise increase in costs as additional staff would need to be employed.

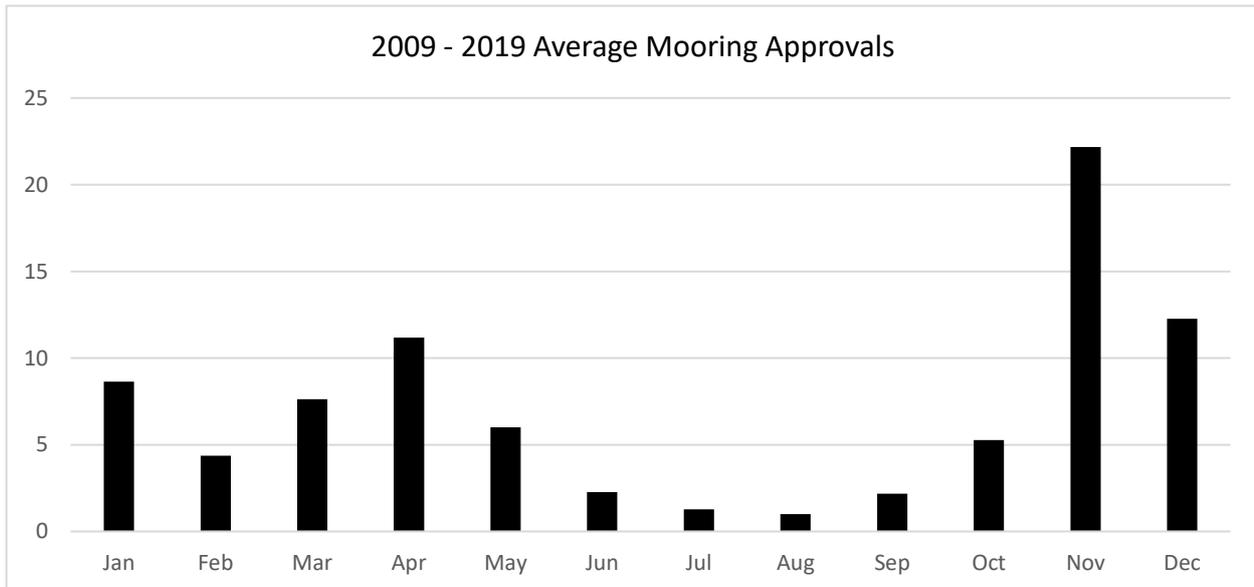


Figure 1: Average Mooring Approvals - LHI

Cost per vessel inspection	\$350
2009 - 2019 annual average visiting vessels	84
25% of annual average visiting vessels	21
Cost to inspect 25% of arrivals	\$7,350
Cost of levy for every vessel to cover inspection costs	\$87.50

Table 1: Vessel biosecurity charges workings

Any vessels which arrive without having obtained proper mooring approval, and/or those which are reasonably believed to have not properly undertaken the mandatory biosecurity actions would be identified as high biosecurity risk and would be met for a full inspection. The Master of the vessel would be liable for the charges related to these inspections and activities. It is anticipated that these vessels, assuming they are permitted to moor, would be charged the full inspection amount. This would be \$350. All vessels arriving without prior approval, including incomplete applications, or who have failed to complete the required biosecurity actions, would be charged \$350.

¹ \$350 is anticipated to cover all costs associated with the entire time taken for inspections to be carried out and any consumables which may be required (EG. Baits, boat fuel, etc.) and somewhat assist in covering administration time requirements.

The LHIB biosecurity team currently utilise NSW Marine Parks staff and vessel to access visiting vessels for inspection. This is currently provided at no charge to the LHIB. This arrangement is verbally agreed for the remainder of 2020 and is anticipated to be formalised for the 2021/22 period. The fee structure would be reviewed should the Board need to provide its own vessel and crew for inspections.

Visiting Vessels – Commercial vessels

All commercial vessels would be met for a full inspection. Although these vessels are subject to more strict mooring approval conditions, they generally present an elevated risk in comparison to recreational vessels. All commercial vessels would be charged a minimum biosecurity inspection fee of \$350. Should inspections require more than 2 hours, each additional hour would be charged at \$175/hour in addition to all over standard fees and charges.

*Definition of a commercial vessel as per the Visiting Vessel guidelines: “Vessels which are engaged in a commercial operation and/or any vessels intending to land stores, goods, cargo, or luggage that totals over 2 cubic meters by external volume measurements ashore on Lord Howe Island. Examples of such operations may include, but are not limited to: commercial charter vessels/voyages, chartered freight operations, and/or private vessels transporting bulk goods to Lord Howe Island.”

Visiting aircraft – non-commercial

Given current volumes, the meeting of a majority non-commercial/private aircraft is considered to be generally achievable with current resourcing. Similar to vessels, an additional charge or levy is proposed in place of a direct ‘user pays’ system. As inspections are less complex and do not require vessel use, a lower fee may be applied. It is expected that a charge of \$150 would be suitable to achieve ‘cost recovery’.

Proposed Fee Changes

The table below (Table 2) is proposed to be considered.

Airport Charges				
1	Airport Charges (incl landing fees, parking fees & Environment Levy)		Fee / Charge 2020/21 (\$)	Proposed Change
	a	Airport Usage Charge		
	i	Airport Usage Charge (Annual) - for commercial freight operators (excluding Qantaslink) - unlimited landings and parking	\$ 6,333.00	
	ii	Airport Usage Charge (Annual) for local aircraft only - unlimited landings and parking	\$ 2,708.00	
	b	Landing Fees		
	i	Non-RPT per tonne per occasion - excluding island based aircraft	\$ 30.00	
	c	Tie down \ parking fees for non-RPT aircraft per night	\$ 26.00	
	d	Administration Fee (including biosecurity)	\$ 40.00	\$ 190.00
2	Qantaslink Passenger Levy			
	a	Commercial Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) per sector per PAX	\$ 32.75	
3	Environment Levy			
	a	Commercial and non-commercial flights per sector per PAX (not payable if only staying one night; ie transiting)	\$ 21.83	
Mooring Charges				
17	Mooring - Public (Temporary)			
	a	Administration Fee (including biosecurity)	\$ 45.00	\$ 135.00
	b	Per night	\$ 50.00	
	c	Environmental Levy. Per person per visit (not payable if only staying one night; ie transiting)	\$ 43.66	
	d	Late/incomplete biosecurity application fee	\$ -	\$ 350.00
	e	Commercial Vessels		
	i	Biosecurity Inspection	\$ -	\$ 350.00
	ii	Extended Inspection (>2hrs)	\$ -	\$ 175/hr

Table 2: Proposed changes to LHIB Fees and Charges

Comparison of fees with other localities

The current visitor access fees to Lord Howe Island, including the Environmental Levy are significantly less than other similar levies, fees, and charges applied at other globally significant conservation sites. For locations such as the Galapagos, the equivalent fee can typically range from \$135 - \$220 per person per entry. The fee change proposed in this report only covers a small portion of the Biosecurity budget specifically charging inspections of visiting vessels/aircraft. In the medium term if external funding can't be found to support Biosecurity operations, consideration could be given to amending the Environment Levy. In

doing this consideration might be given to charging a differential fee for visitors and for residents. Other destinations such as the Galapagos already do this; i.e. tourist fee: USD\$100, Ecuadorian fee: USD\$6.

Process to amend fees and charges

Unlike local councils, the Lord Howe Island Board is not required to go to public exhibition to amend fees and charges. However, it is proposed that these fee amendments be placed on public exhibition, and following the exhibition the Board receive a report to consider a recommendation that may include adopt, amend or reject the proposed revised fee structure. The normal period for public exhibition is four weeks, however if it is proposed exhibition period is over Christmas that the exhibition period be extended to six weeks.

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Prepared: Darcelle Matassoni - Acting Biosecurity Team Leader

18/11/20

Endorsed: Peter Adams CEO