



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

MEDIA RELEASE
Quarantine Matters!

English-Greek

AQIS20429NESB

26 October 2005

QUARANTINE ON LOOKOUT FOR RISKY CHRISTMAS MAIL

CLOSE to 40,000 items mailed to Australia last Christmas were confiscated by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). Hundreds of these high-risk Christmas gifts were sent from Greece.

The mail parcels were inspected and seized by AQIS because they contained restricted food, plant or animal products that could have introduced dangerous pests and diseases into Australia.

This year AQIS is again on the lookout for risky Christmas mail. Seemingly innocent packages containing pinecones, vine wreaths, straw, raw nuts, conifer, spruce, holly, mistletoe cuttings, decorated eggs, meat or dairy products could in fact pose a serious threat to Australia's environment and agriculture industries. These items, and many more, are restricted and may be confiscated.

AQIS will also be on the lookout for hampers containing restricted food such as meat, dairy products, raw nuts, and dried mushrooms. These items pose a serious threat to Australia and could carry diseases such as foot and mouth, Newcastle disease or avian influenza (bird flu).

Bob Stirling, AQIS International Mail Program Manager, strongly suggests that people living in Australia expecting international mail this Christmas should inform their relatives and friends overseas about Australia's strict quarantine laws.

"AQIS asks people to tell friends and relatives overseas to avoid sending gifts that contain restricted items and to honestly list the contents of parcels they do send," Mr Stirling said.

"AQIS now screens every single item of mail coming to Australia. All food and anything made from wood, plant or animal material must be declared on the postal declaration label. Some of these items will be released after inspection but restricted products will be destroyed and other gifts may have to be treated — at your expense and with your consent — to make them safe.

"Australia is very serious about keeping out unwanted pests and diseases, with fines of up to \$60,000 for serious breaches of our quarantine laws."

To find out what can and cannot be mailed to Australia:

- contact the AQIS office in your State for a free copy of the *What can't be mailed to Australia?* brochure in Greek;
- visit www.aqis.gov.au/greek; or
- call AQIS on 1800 020 504 (free call within Australia).

CONTACTS

For interviews in your language: ask for an interview with an AQIS officer who speaks your language. For interview opportunities, phone media manager Carson Creagh 0414 577 472.

Photos: 02 6271 6402, 0419 26 7277 for publication-quality images of (1) typical items seized from international mail, (2) Quarantine detector dogs in action.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FISHERIES AND FORESTRY