

Pest and Disease Interception: Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness.

I would like to address the handling of pest and disease risk by Biosecurity officers at Melbourne Airport.

I was a Biosecurity Officer at Melbourne Airport for fifteen years until my recent retirement in September of 2016.

Years ago, realising that many staff were not undertaking thorough (even cursory) inspections of seized goods, I began retrieving and fully inspecting items from the seizure bins. My actions were noticed, questioned and even ridiculed (even by Management). I have undoubtedly been the main provider of specimens to Operational Science Services over many years, with many finds deemed to be 'actionable'. When one find produced black sigatoga I was heartily congratulated by Risk. I suggested that this be publicised to inform and encourage all staff to follow. This never occurred. I was doing what I was taught and what OSS promote – full inspection of suspect seizures for signs of pest and disease, and submission of such for identification.

From a conscientious worker's point of view:

- collection of pest and disease samples was (up to September 2016) not considered to be of great importance by staff and management.
- staff were generally ignorant of correct procedure for collection and reporting of pest and disease.
- performance of basic duties such as seeking out of and collection of pest and disease did not seem to count in consideration of performance and promotion.
- equipment was often lacking and supply/maintenance of such not methodically monitored.

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