

Summary of our report

Ministry for Primary Industries: Preparing for and responding to biosecurity incursions – follow-up audit



In February 2013, we published *Ministry for Primary Industries: Preparing for and responding to biosecurity incursions* (our 2013 report).

Our 2013 report looked at how effectively the biosecurity system was preparing for and responding to biosecurity incursions. We found several significant weaknesses in the system.

We made seven high-level recommendations to the Ministry for Primary Industries (the Ministry). Our recommendations covered three broad themes. The Ministry was to:

- be better prepared;
- work better with response partners; and
- prepare a set of performance measures.

This year, we reviewed the Ministry's progress in addressing our recommendations. This report assesses that progress.

Since our 2013 report, the Ministry has made good progress with how it prepares for and responds to biosecurity incursions. The Ministry needs to work further to embed improvements, but it has laid the groundwork and is continuing with improvements as it learns from responses to incursions.

Being better prepared

In our 2013 report, we said that the Ministry was under-prepared for potential incursions of some high-risk organisms and had not given a high enough priority to planning.

We also said that the Ministry needed to strengthen how it planned its workforce and to improve capability. It needed a better approach to managing and training staff to ensure that responses are consistent.

The Ministry has prepared a response model to deal with all types of responses. Under this model, the same framework and structures are used regardless of the size and complexity of response.

The Ministry's investment in a model that streamlines many processes and allows a consistent approach gives it a solid foundation for responding consistently.

In our 2013 report, we said that the Ministry's planning for an outbreak of foot and mouth disease was inadequate, which resulted in serious weaknesses in the biosecurity system.

Vital statistics:

- 26 pages
- Presented to Parliament on Wednesday 21 October 2015
- Contact: reports@oag.govt.nz

The Ministry is now much better prepared for an outbreak of foot and mouth disease than it was in 2013. It continues to work on improving its foot and mouth disease preparedness programme.

In our 2013 report, we said that the current animal health laboratory in Wallaceville was not fit for purpose. We recommended that it be replaced at the earliest possible date to reduce the risk of a breakdown.

In June 2015, the Government agreed to spend \$87.2 million on a new bio-containment laboratory to replace the current laboratory. The new laboratory will further enhance our biosecurity capability and preparedness once it has been built and is operational.

Working better with response partners

In our 2013 report, we said that the way the Ministry works with response partners and reports performance needed to improve.

The Ministry has put in place new and updated arrangements so that it can better respond collaboratively with its partners. We have seen examples of how the improvements have helped the Ministry to respond better, such as in the response to the fruit fly incursion in 2015.

We saw improvements in the relationship between the Ministry andASUREQuality Limited, and we saw the first example of industry partners taking part in governance.

A better way of measuring performance

The Ministry has prepared a set of performance measures designed to measure operational activity and the effectiveness and efficiency of its response. It is working to ensure that it has a cycle of continuous improvement, based on lessons learned.

It is too early to assess the effect of this new process. However, when set up, it could help to produce new key performance indicators, which will allow the Ministry to measure performance better.

Culture of continuous improvement

During the past year, we observed strong leadership and a focus on delivering effective change at the Ministry. This provided clear direction and enabled resources to be targeted to making significant improvements.

The Ministry used the recommendations in our 2013 report as a framework to deliver these improvements but, importantly, has been pragmatic and solution-focused in its approach.

We also observed a culture of continuous improvement that we consider puts the Ministry in a good position to make further improvements.

We encourage the Ministry to continue to focus its efforts and resources on readiness and to deliver the improvement plan, to ensure that the Ministry is prepared for biosecurity incursions.