

Lord Howe Quarantine Initiatives

Reducing the risk of importing exotic pests and disease

Quarantine Protection on Lord Howe Island

Quarantine protection is essential to protect the biodiversity values and quality of life on Lord Howe Island. The Lord Howe Island Board supported by the NSW Environmental Trust have over the last 2 years put in place a range of initiatives to assist in minimizing the risk of introducing unwanted pests and diseases.

Because of Lord Howe Island's isolated evolutionary history, nearly half the Islands plants are endemic, that is, they are found nowhere else in the world. Much of the animal life including many of the birds, its two reptiles, the Lord Howe Island skink and gecko and literally thousands of insects are also unique to Lord Howe Island.

Many introduced plants and animals have no natural competitors or diseases on the Island. In the absence of these natural population controls, the introduced species can often out compete the Islands native species. Examples of this include introduced weeds such as Cherry Guava, Ground and Climbing Asparagus and the Australian native Pittosporum. Animal and insect introductions include the East Coast Skink, the Bleating Tree Frog, rats and mice, the Tasmanian Masked Owl and several ant species including the Big Headed Ant.

Unwanted introductions not only impact on the Islands natural values, but also can be very expensive to control or eradicate.

Education and awareness are vital components of a quarantine risk reduction strategy. Having the local community and visitors aware of the potential dangers of exotic introductions provides far greater security for the Islands long term quarantine protection.

Recent Initiatives

- The Board, with support of the NSW Environmental Trust has engaged a quarantine consultant, Mr John Thorp, to undertake an education program both on and off Island. Stevedores employed by the local Island trading vessel the "Island Trader" have been trained in pest

identification and in recognizing freight that is considered high risk. Stevedores employed on the mainland at Yamba where the ship is loaded have also been trained.

- A key element to good quarantine security is identifying and eliminating the risk before the problem arrives. With this in mind, meetings have been held with all major mainland freight suppliers to the Island. Checklists have been developed with these companies which address issues such as freight storage areas being kept clean and restricted to hard surface areas to minimize the risk of insect pests climbing aboard. Freight suppliers have been encouraged to become supporters of the Island's efforts to remain free of imported pests and diseases.
- Education training workshops were also undertaken with a range of stakeholders on the Island including tour operators, lodge owners, local businesses, representative of Qantas Link, the local School and staff from the Lord Howe Island Board
- Additional quarantine information has also been provided for persons traveling with QantasLink by way of in-flight seat pocket information.
- Improved plant importation and weed risk assessment procedures have also been developed to reduce the risk of importing a potential weed to the Island.
- Soil sampling has been undertaken to determine the presence of the destructive plant disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which is now widespread on the mainland and causing significant damage to native forests. The soil pathogen is easily spread via mud on footwear. Walking guides on the Island have been provided with boot scrub kits for their clients to minimize the risk of importing this plant disease.
- The Lord Howe Island Board's quarantine officer undertakes inspections of the ships freight upon arrival at Lord Howe Island. The ship arrives every fortnight

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The LHI Board has in place a comprehensive plant importation policy to minimize the risk of importing weed species



Pallets are regularly checked for unwanted hitch hikers



Only commercially prepared and palletised feedstock and fertilisers is permitted to the Island



Freight suppliers have been encouraged to become supporters of the Island's efforts to remain free of imported pests and diseases. And



QantasLink passengers get in-flight quarantine information.



Other threats

Exotic frog species represent a threat to the Islands natural values



Exotic ant species such as the Fire Ant, Big Headed Ant and Yellow crazy Ant all pose serious threats to the Islands biodiversity values



Photos by Greg Thorp and Island Trader