

Biosecurity Monthly Newsletter



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Seized baby rubber plant ex Tahiti.

On Saturday 11 Jan, Senior Biosecurity officer Mr. Maru Nganu seized a fresh plant from a passengers luggage on an inbound Air Tahiti flight VT035 from Papeete, Tahiti.

The plant was imported by a foreign passenger and was concealed in an empty water bottle.

The passenger had declared the item to Biosecurity on arrival but our officer removed the plant from the passenger, and secured for delivery to the Natural Heritage Trust office for identification.

Natural Heritage confirmed the plant to be *Pepperomia obtusifolia*, commonly known as Baby rubber plant. The plant was also inspected for any signs of nematode but none were sighted.

The plant is currently recorded as being present on Mauke and Rarotonga and possibly other islands too.

The untreated plant was then incinerated at the Rarotonga International Air-

port Incinerator.



Above: Actual Baby Rubber Plant seized ex Tahiti



Above: Baby Rubber Plant

Source: Internet

Inspection of Desert Rose plants ex Thailand

On Tuesday 21 Jan, Biosecurity officers Greta Remuera and Tamarua Teroi inspected a consignment of Desert Roses (*Adenium obesum*) at the Vodafone Post office facility.

The consignment was imported from Bangkok, Thailand by a local individual. The consignment contained 50x *Adenium obesum* plants of different varieties.

The importer had a valid import permit issued by the Biosecurity Service Cook Islands outlining the import requirements for the desert roses.

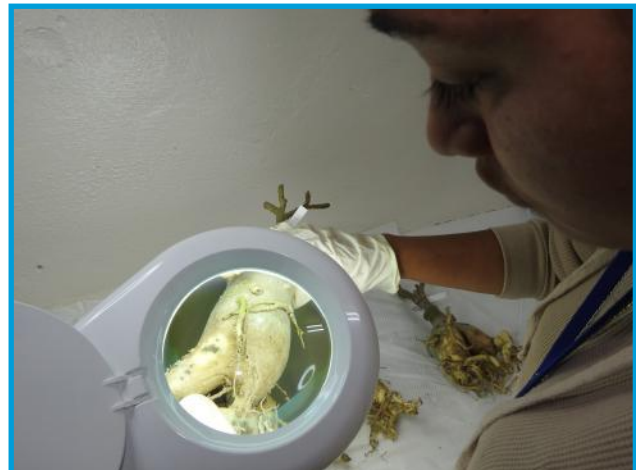
A phyto-sanitary certificate issued by the Department Of Agriculture, Thailand accompanied the consignment of desert roses. The certificate stated that the desert roses were treated with Imidacloprid, Abamectin, Chlorothalonil and Conqueror oil as specified by the Import Heath standards issued by the Biosecurity Service Cook Islands.

The consignment was secured and taken to the Ministry of Agriculture Plant Health and Entomology Lab for a closer visual inspection.

The consignment was thoroughly checked and found to be free of any signs of pests and diseases. Thereafter the consignment was released to the importer.



Above: Biosecurity Officer Greta Remuera inspecting the desert rose plants.



Above: Desert Rose plant viewed through a MagniLamp.



Right: Desert rose plants with shredded paper used when shipping.

Biosecurity and Customs Meeting

On Wednesday 22 Jan, senior members of Cook Islands Customs and Biosecurity convened a meeting.

The purpose was to strengthen the ongoing collaboration and partnership between Customs and Biosecurity services.

The discussions covered all aspects of the border protection environment managed by the two agencies — Airport, Seaport, Postal, cargo clearances and inspections to name a few.

The meeting provided the opportunity for the two agencies to look at ways to improve the work carried out at the border and to maintain a positive working relationship.

Biosecurity looks forward to the next meeting to be hosted by Customs.



Above: Meeting at Ministry Of Agriculture Conference Room, Arorangi.

Ditch Witch is going home.

On January 24, Biosecurity Officer Mr. Tamarua Teroi was requested by McConnell Dowell Contractors to carry out an export inspection on a Ditch Witch vacuum excavator destined for return to New Zealand.

The Ditch Witch vacuum excavator was imported by McConnell Dowell Contractors for use in the Te Mato Vai water project.

The vacuum excavator had completed its task and was no longer required, therefore the company decided to ship it back to New Zealand.

Biosecurity Officer Tamarua inspected the excavator and container thoroughly. The consignment was found to be free of any visual signs of soil or other contaminants and thus a Biosecurity Export Clearance Certificate was granted for the excavator consignment.



Above: Ditch Witch vacuum excavator in shipping container

Luxury Superyacht – “Encore”

On January 28, Biosecurity Officer Mr. Tamarua Teroi carried out a vessel clearance for Luxury Yacht – “Encore” after stopping by briefly in Rarotonga to refuel.

The vessel is registered in Montego Bay, Jamaica and is currently being used as a charter vessel throughout Polynesia. The vessel’s last port was Papeete, Tahiti and her next destination was Nukualofa, Tonga.

As per Biosecurity procedures, the vessel was subject to a biosecurity clearance. The Biosecurity Officer boarded the vessel to carry out the necessary inspection for compliance of the vessel, clearance documents and ship stores.

All were found to be in compliance and Biosecurity clearance was provided. Encore then left for Tonga shortly afterwards.



Above: Super yacht “Encore” at Avatiu Ports

Seized Pork Crackling from Philippines

On January 6, Biosecurity Officer Trainee Mr Ellis Solomona, seized approximately 500mgs of pork crackling from Bulacan, Philippines.

The pork cracklings were imported by a Filipino individual who is in the Cook Islands on a work permit.

Pork cracklings are very high risk due to the presence of the African Swine Fever in the Philippines.

The Biosecurity Service will remain vigilant in protecting our borders from the deadly African Swine Fever that is decimating pigs in parts of Asia and abroad.

The consignment was immediately seized and incinerated at the Rarotonga International Airport Incinerator.



Right: Packets of seized Pork Cracklings