



Australian Government
Biosecurity Australia

11 March 2005

ANIMAL BIOSECURITY POLICY MEMORANDUM 2005/01

**POLICY REVIEW ON THE IMPORTATION OF FRESHWATER ORNAMENTAL
FINFISH: RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH IRIDOVIRUSES**

This Animal Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (ABPM) advises stakeholders of the commencement of a biosecurity policy review on the importation of live freshwater ornamental finfish with respect to iridoviruses.

A number of species of freshwater fish are permitted live importation into Australia for use as ornamental fish. These imports are controlled through:

- the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* administered by the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage; and
- the Quarantine Proclamation 1998 and the quarantine conditions established by the 1999 import risk analysis (IRA) of ornamental finfish (Animal Quarantine Policy Memorandum 1999/77).

The IRA considered several species of gouramis (subfamily Trichogastrinae of the family Osphronemidae) and concluded, amongst other things, that specific risk management measures were required for these species due to biosecurity risk posed by iridoviruses, including gourami iridovirus (GIV). Iridoviruses can cause serious disease in fish.

Australia's quarantine measures include that gouramis are held in an export premises for a minimum 14 day period prior to export, health certification that they are sourced from populations with no known significant clinical disease in the last six months, and that the fish are held in post-arrival quarantine for a minimum of 14 days.

Large numbers of gouramis have been imported into Australia over several decades without adverse consequences and as part of the 1999 IRA, it was considered unlikely that imported gouramis will enter natural waterways.

Recently reported research conducted by a student at the University of Sydney has indicated the detection of GIV, which has been considered to be exotic to Australia, in several species of ornamental gouramis sourced from a pet shop. In experimental cohabitation trials, the virus was transmitted to Murray cod (*Maccullochella peelii peelii*), a native fish. Evidence of the virus has also been detected in clinically normal ornamental finfish after 28 days.

Biosecurity Australia has commissioned a research project to conduct detailed investigations of disease events of ornamental finfish in quarantine. The project is a one-year disease testing program, focusing on goldfish, live-bearers, gouramis and cichlids. Laboratory testing will target fish showing signs of disease of potential quarantine concern.

Policy review

Biosecurity Australia reviews its import policies in the event of significant new scientific information. Biosecurity Australia will examine the new information arising from experiments at the University of Sydney and any other relevant material as it re-assesses the quarantine risk associated with imports of freshwater ornamental finfish with respect to iridoviruses.

Next steps

In due course, Biosecurity Australia will contact stakeholders regarding further steps in the review process, including the circulation of a policy review document for stakeholder comment. In the interim, we invite stakeholders to submit to Biosecurity Australia any relevant technical or other information they believe may be appropriate to this review.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should contact the officer listed below. Alternatively, if you wish to be removed from the distribution list, please advise the contact officer.

Confidentiality

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to policy memorandums will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the Memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

ROBYN MARTIN
A/g General Manager
Animal Biosecurity

Contact officer: Warren Vant
Telephone no: (02) 6272 4436
Facsimile no: (02) 6272 3399
E-mail: warren.vant@daff.gov.au