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***What would be the process to add a country to the approved list?***

Assessing each individual country for the export of pet and/or aviary psittacine birds to Australia is important to ensure they can meet Australia's biosecurity requirements. Countries will need to apply directly to the department to be assessed, and a more detailed explanation of the approval process and its associated criteria can be found under section 5.1.5 in the draft psittacine review. This approach provides a high level of confidence that each bird imported is prepared in accordance with Australia's biosecurity measures.

Having an animal in a non-approved country is a common issue for imports of other species, such as dogs and cats, so we have extensive experience in the area. In our experience with similar situations, we find it is generally much simpler and faster to move an animal to an approved country for pre-export preparations rather than seeking to have a non-approved country become approved.

***How do you ensure that parrots don't come from other countries, via the approved countries?***

Household pet and aviary birds must reside in an approved country only during any quarantine and mandatory residency periods. It is the responsibility of competent authorities in approved countries to verify that pre-export quarantine requirements have been met. A competent authority's ability to do this reliably is one of the factors we consider when deciding whether a country should be approved. The department will assess this information and may request further information or conduct in-country verification activities, such as but not limited to, observation of premises approval. Parrots legally imported into an approved country may be eligible to be imported into Australia provided they meet the approved country's import requirements, are free from quarantine restriction, and complete all relevant Australian pre-export quarantine requirements in the approved country.

***How are emerging variants of known pathogens considered in the risk assessment (incl. unknown variants with higher pathogenicity)?***

Known variants of pathogens identified in the hazard table of biosecurity risk to Australia were considered in the review. Unknown variants or non-existent variants are unable to be considered in a risk assessment as it only assesses current pathogens and utilises current scientific literature and knowledge. However, the department continually monitors the animal health situations in other countries and new developments in scientific knowledge. If issues arise that threaten Australia's biosecurity, the department can make changes to import conditions or suspend imports as appropriate in the circumstances.

***How did you assess the potential presence of a pathogen in the country of origin - based on reports to state animal health authorities, published literature, other? Are all of these diseases notifiable in the relevant countries?***

The review itself makes no attempt to assess the potential presence of pathogens in individual countries, it is a generic review that applies to all countries. When determining whether a country can be approved, systems for, among other things, surveillance, identification of diseases of concern, internal reporting obligations, reporting history to the World Organisation for Animal Health (the OIE), competence of veterinary services, published literature and which diseases are notifiable within that country are assessed.

***What ‘adverse consequences’ were considered as part of this review?***

All potential factors were considered when assessing adverse consequences and effects. A comprehensive list of considerations can be found under section 2.3.4 of the review that include:

- loss of life, health and production due to morbidity and mortality
- impacts on the living environment due to morbidity and mortality of wild birds
- effects on industry
- effects on domestic and international trade
- the effects on wild psittacines including the potential loss of genetic diversity within the species, or potentially the species itself
- the loss of pet and aviary birds
- impact on ecotourism
- social impacts on affected communities.

***Avian paraavulavirus 3 was identified as a disease requiring further review. This virus has no treatment and yet can cause disease and death in Neophemas. We have critically endangered Neophemas in Australia, yet the estimate of likely consequences has been considered very low. Are the risks to critically endangered species considered in these assessments? When assessing the potential consequences of an exotic disease establishing in Australia, particularly in wild bird populations, how did the conservation status of some of our native parrots influence these assessments?***

The risks to Australian native species, including endangered species, is considered under potential adverse consequences. Australian native psittacine birds are likely to be susceptible to infection if an exotic disease was to enter, however, there is often variability of susceptibility between species. Susceptibility and exotic disease progression was assessed using information of Australian native psittacines held overseas. Where information was not available, the progression of infection in Australian native psittacine birds is assumed to be similar to that in exotic psittacine birds. Based on current knowledge of these diseases and the absence of reported large scale outbreaks of these diseases in wild bird populations in other countries, it is thought unlikely that they would cause large scale mortality in wild bird populations if introduced into Australia. Any submissions received on the draft report that provide additional scientific information on the transmissibility, spread, or impact of a disease will be considered when finalizing the review.

***Evaluation of unrestricted risk - a number of pet and aviary birds may be given free flight potential in an outside environment (e.g. walking on owner’s shoulder, birds trained for involvement in free flight shows). Was this exposure considered in assessing risk?***

Yes, this exposure pathway was considered in assessing biosecurity risk.

***Disease latency is of particular significance with psittacines, given long life span of many species.***

There are a number of factors that contribute to the likelihood a latent disease will be expressed and/or identified during the import process. Some birds may experience stress during transportation and quarantine isolation, and stress is commonly associated with latent disease expression. Other

recommended measures to identify disease carriers include appropriate quarantine periods allowing sufficient time for incubation periods and disease expression, pre- and post- export physical examination during quarantine, treatments for internal and external parasites, and diagnostic testing of all birds for specific pathogens.

***I have already moved to Australia, but my pet bird is stuck overseas. It looks like I can't meet the 'household pet' conditions. How can I import my bird?***

If imports are permitted, provisions will be in place to consider circumstances where owners of household pet birds have already immigrated to Australia and left pet birds in their country of origin. The provisions would allow for import of these birds for a period of 12 months following the import conditions first being placed on BICON.

***Why is there no requirement for a period of ownership or residency for aviary psittacines versus pet psittacines? This has potential to open up markets for exploitation of wild psittacine populations around the world and could lead to Australia being an intermediary in illegal wildlife trade.***

There are differences with quarantine requirements and conditions for household pet and aviary birds recommended in the draft risk assessment. Household pet birds need proof of ownership and will be required to enter a standard room at the government quarantine facility in Mickleham, Victoria to complete post-entry quarantine. Aviary birds do not need proof of ownership and will be required to enter a Biosecurity Containment Level 3 (BC3) live bird room at the government quarantine facility in Mickleham, Victoria.

Aviary birds are considered to be a higher biosecurity risk than household pet birds which is why they require a BC3 facility. The proof of ownership requirement for household pet birds is designed to prevent aviary birds from being imported via the household pet pathway.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that the international trade in wildlife does not threaten wild populations of plants and animals. Australia implements CITES through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Commercial trade in live native birds is prohibited, unless the animals are captive-bred and sourced from a captive breeding operation that has been registered with the CITES Secretariat.

***Could consideration be given to a lower set of requirements where risks/diseases are NOT present in the country of origin?***

Being generic, this draft review covers all countries under the same conditions. In certain circumstances separate import conditions for individual countries are developed if a country's health status is considered to be equal to or higher than Australia's. This is an involved process that requires a separate assessment for that specific country and is unlikely to be commenced just for an individual consignment (whether for household pet or aviary birds).

***How long is needed to have all tests and procedures done prior to approval in the country of origin? Where is the quarantine required to be done in the country of origin - in home or in a government vet facility?***

Completion of the tests will be entirely dependent on the country of origin and access to relevant laboratories. Pre-export isolation is for a minimum of 35 days, however, all laboratory testing and procedures must also be conducted during the isolation period prior to exportation.

This draft risk assessment focuses on biosecurity risks and provides guidelines of what needs to be implemented to meet Australia's Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP). Other aspects of the process such as operational issues, costs and timing of diagnostic procedures are not within the scope of this review.

Quarantine must be conducted in a facility under the control and supervision of an Official Veterinarian or Government Accredited Veterinarian from the exporting country. What this means in practice can vary depending on the regulatory systems an approved country has in place. Documentation and attestations regarding the suitability of this facility will be assessed by the department's import assessment team for each consignment prior to approval of a permit.

***Imports were stopped several years ago because of disease concerns. Those same diseases still exist now, so won't starting imports up again mean we import those diseases?***

The importation of live psittacine policy was suspended in 1995 due to incomplete knowledge of certain diseases of psittacine birds and a lack of suitable testing methods for imported birds for the presence of these diseases. New diagnostic tests for psittacine bornavirus and herpesvirus were developed at the Australian Centre of Disease Preparedness (ACDP) in preparation for this policy. This draft risk review also takes into account new and relevant scientific information and advice from scientific experts. It proposes that the importation of live household pet and aviary psittacine birds to Australia be permitted, subject to a range of biosecurity risk management measures using the most recent information.

***Quarantine in Australia is listed as being a minimum of 15 days; from memory in the 1900's it was longer, why has this quarantine period been shortened?***

Quarantine times for many species of animals has been adjusted over the years as new scientific research and diagnostic tests have been developed. After conducting this risk review, the department has recommended a minimum of 35 days in pre-export quarantine and a minimum 15 days in post-entry quarantine to be sufficient time to meet Australia's Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP) to protect against biosecurity risks.

***Are the cages used in post-entry quarantine to be provided by each importer? Are these cages then returned or are they subsequently used by other imports?***

Yes, the importer must provide their own cage for pet birds, this cage will then be released to the importer when the bird is released from quarantine. Refer to the draft policy 5.2.5:

*3) At least one week prior to arrival, the owner (or agent) must provide the department's quarantine facility with a suitably sized cage(s) with perches of appropriate size, all feed and a feeding plan, and any items for environmental enrichment.*

This will apply to both household pet and aviary birds.

***What will be the cost of quarantine?***

The Biosecurity charges are currently under review and new charges will include fees for the quarantine of live animals (including pet birds and aviary birds) at the Mickleham facility.

***Is human company and interaction provided to birds during the quarantine period? I'm worried my bird will fret and maybe get sick in quarantine.***

Operational policy will be developed if/when the draft policy is finalised, but as for all animals in quarantine, they will receive daily care from qualified staff.

***If a bird dies during the journey to Australia, or subsequently dies or has to be euthanased whilst in post-entry quarantine, will the family be able to farewell their pet and/or is burial an option?***

If a bird dies whilst subject to biosecurity control during the journey or in quarantine, a post-mortem examination and testing will need to be conducted to determine if an exotic disease was the cause of death. This is important for all the other birds that were travelling with this bird or in contact with this bird during quarantine. Unfortunately, the bird cannot be released from the testing laboratory for burial because of the sampling and testing required, and because of the high biosecurity risk and management required. All testing will also need to be paid for by the importer.

***What is the veterinary care process at Mickleham if a bird develops illness from a disease of non-biosecurity risk during the quarantine period? Can private vets be involved?***

The policy for psittacines has not been finalised in detail, however, government veterinarians will be monitoring the health of the birds throughout the import process. Private veterinarians may be consulted if required, however, details about entry to the quarantine facility have not been developed yet.

***How invasive are the diagnostic tests and procedures?***

The testing required for the proposed import policy require swabs of the bird's mouth and cloaca. It may also involve taking samples of any skin lesions if they are present.

There is one test that requires a small blood sample to be drawn. Drawing blood from birds is a common procedure for veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

***Who will be responsible for the investigation, control management and the associated costs if an exotic disease incursion occurs from imported birds?***

Most hazards of psittacine birds assessed in this draft review are not subject to formal response arrangements in Australia, such as contractual arrangements under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).

The National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) sets out a framework for responding to national biosecurity incidents where there are predominantly public benefits, this includes incursions of exotic pests and diseases in terrestrial environments. The implementation of NEBRA is dependent on the pest or disease, and needs to be deemed a potential threat to the area as well as other conditions outlined in the document (see [NEBRA document](#)).

***Could you please explain how this risk assessment process relates/links to other aspects of importation of live animals into Australia i.e. CITES regulations, Pest Species assessments etc.?***

The risk review for the importation of psittacines focuses on the biosecurity risks to Australia and provides guidelines on meeting Australia's ALOP and is performed under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (Biosecurity Act). Any imports that are permitted because of the recommendations of this review are regulated under the Biosecurity Act. Assessments concerning the environment, including the assessment of potential pest species and The Live Import List, are regulated under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act). CITES requirements are also assessed and regulated under the EPBC Act.

Animals need to meet requirements in both the Biosecurity Act and the EPBC Act to be eligible for import into Australia.

***Will these import conditions reduce smuggling? Were any new diseases found in Australia because of smuggling?***

Smuggling of birds in and out of Australia does occur, but the department's data indicates this is infrequent. If imports are permitted, the department will review the situation in coming years to determine if providing a legal pathway to import psittacine birds has any effect on smuggling rates.

Given smuggling is not a regulated pathway, it is difficult to know for certain if and how many new diseases have been introduced into Australia via this pathway.

***Have you set a timeline window regarding importations - i.e. how long it will run for?***

There is no timeline window linked with imports. If the final version of the risk review for the importation of psittacines recommends imports be permitted, import conditions will be developed and finalised which will allow the legal importation of psittacines. However, the department continually monitors the animal health situations in other countries and new developments in scientific knowledge. If issues arise that threaten Australia's biosecurity, the department has the authority to suspend imports at any time.

***What is the gain of importing these birds, particularly if they are NOT household companion birds, that justifies the stress caused to the birds, by transport and quarantine?***

The import risk assessment for psittacine birds is focused on the biosecurity risks of importing household pet and aviary psittacines into Australia. Positions and views involving ethics and welfare of pet and aviary psittacines are outside the scope of this review.