

MEDIA RELEASE

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Wave of exotic invaders stopped – more to come: new report

Australia needs a stronger national approach to protect our society, environment and agriculture by reducing the risk of new exotic animal invaders establishing in Australia, according to a new Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IA CRC) report. '*Detecting and preventing new incursions of exotic animals in Australia*' (by Dr Wendy Henderson and Dr Mary Bomford) reviews for the first time the past decade of interceptions and incursions.

Mr Andreas Glanznig, the IA CRC Chief Executive, said that Australia must avoid the worst-case scenario such as has befallen Florida where 137 exotic animal species have established in the environment.

“Continually improving biosecurity arrangements, backed up by a strong national response system to vertebrate pests incursions will enable us to quickly detect and remove new and emerging exotic invaders,” Mr Glanznig said.

The report presents the most comprehensive national picture to date of interceptions (seizures, surrenders and stowaways) of exotic animals at the border and within Australia, as well as incursions (animals sighted in the wild). The report found:

- The most numerous smuggled species were fish and birds. These were mostly destined for the illegal pet trade.
- The most common stowaways intercepted by AQIS were reptiles (mainly geckos) and amphibians (mostly toads). Many of these, including the black-spined toad, Tokay gecko and Asiatic painted frog, were found to have a high chance of establishing pest populations in Australia.
- The most common illegal animals seized or surrendered from private dwellings include iguanas, corn snakes, boa constrictors, veiled chameleons and leopard geckos. These species also present a serious risk of establishing in Australia.

The report's analysis involved close cooperation from State, Territory and Australian Government agencies, with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and Australian Customs and Border Protection Service being the two key federal agencies involved in making interceptions that successfully prevent such invasive animals entering Australia.

The proposed five-year extension of the IA CRC includes a program to develop critical knowledge and tools that will underpin an effective national response system to vertebrate pests incursions.

If anyone sees unusual animals in the wild, they can report to Canberra Connect on Ph 13 22 81, or through the national hotline on 1800 084 881.

Pics are available of green iguana, corn snakes, boa constrictor, common snapping turtle, red-eared slider turtles.

Note: Monday 10 October 2011 is a public holiday in Canberra should you require pics, please email on Friday 7 October or phone mobile 0406376648.

MORE INFORMATION:

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