The David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement Award
Recognises an individual that has made an outstanding contribution to biosecurity integrity in Australia over a number of years.

Australian Biosecurity Award – Industry category
Recognises individuals, groups or organisations in industry that have demonstrated a significant contribution to maintaining Australia’s biosecurity integrity.

Australian Biosecurity Award – Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year category
Recognises Australian primary producers, including individuals and organisations, that have demonstrated outstanding on-farm biosecurity practices.

Australian Biosecurity Award – Government category
Recognises individuals, groups or organisations within government that have demonstrated a significant contribution to maintaining Australia’s biosecurity integrity.
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Governments, businesses and individuals worldwide recognise the importance of biosecurity.

A strong biosecurity system keeps countries, like ours, substantially free from exotic pests and diseases, and in doing so, assures the future productivity of our agriculture sector and environment.

We work offshore, at the border and onshore to maintain Australia’s enviable biosecurity status.

But managing biosecurity risk is a challenging task.

Increases in international travel and trade—coupled with variable climate—mean new threats can emerge frequently.

As the risk pathways change, we face an increasingly complex biosecurity landscape.

That’s why it’s important we all play our part.

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility.

We partner with industry and government to manage biosecurity risks and increase community awareness.

The Australian Biosecurity Awards complement these efforts by recognising organisations, groups and individuals who work closely with us to support and promote Australia’s biosecurity and the systems that uphold it.

The awards acknowledge those who have made the extra effort to minimise the risk of exotic pests and diseases entering Australia and, in doing so, have helped to protect our $60 billion agriculture industries as well as our unique environment, native flora and fauna, our tourism industries and lifestyle.

This year sees the introduction of a new category which recognises Australian producers’ efforts in outstanding on-farm biosecurity practices.

I congratulate all of this year’s winners and thank them for their ongoing contribution to Australia’s biosecurity.

Lyn O’Connell PSM
Deputy Secretary
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Tony Beaver is one of the true pioneers of the ‘shared responsibility’ approach to biosecurity.

As director of the Food and Beverage Importers Association he has served as an industry leader for food and beverage importation since the 1990s and has made a significant contribution to biosecurity regulation over many years.

Tony was an early advocate for partnerships between the department and industry, and has been actively involved in biosecurity regulation for almost two decades.

He is known for his open and respectful approach, and is amicable and accommodating in finding ways to balance the often competing needs of his sector and the government.

Tony’s opinion is highly valued by both industry and the department, and his constructive feedback on issues affecting the sector has significantly improved the way imported food is regulated in Australia.

He was part of a review committee for the *Imported Food Control Act 1992* and helped lay the groundwork for Food Import Compliance Agreements.

He has served as an industry representative on the Imported Food Consultative Committee for 15 years, including chairing the committee for more than a decade, and is an active member of other departmental biosecurity industry consultative committees.

Tony has been a strong advocate for biosecurity measures and enabled the introduction of regulatory activities with industry support.

With his experience and guidance, the department was able to implement recognition of a food importer’s documented food safety management system; a significant improvement to the border inspection program.

Over nearly two decades, Tony has shown a clear understanding of food safety and biosecurity risks as well as business, sector and market risk.

He is a true advocate for collaboration between industry and government, which has led to a more effective regulatory system for all parties.

Tony’s contributions to the management of food safety in Australia will continue to shape the regulation of imported food, now and in the future.

His work in developing the compliance arrangement concept is set to provide ongoing benefits for both importers and the department, by allowing the department to focus on imports that present a higher level of biosecurity and food safety risk.

Tony was nominated for the award by Mark Phythian from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
First Point Animal Services

Industry category

Animal transfer company First Point Animal Services opened a unique, indoor facility for the safe transfer of animals at Melbourne’s Tullamarine Airport.

The world-class facility offers better animal welfare, improves working conditions for staff and reduces biosecurity risks.
Hundreds of live horses are imported into Australia every year.

Each consignment poses a threat from animal diseases such as equine influenza, equine viral arteritis, contagious equine metritis, piroplasmosis, surra and Japanese encephalitis, as well as the potential for weed seeds in air stalls, equipment and animal faeces.

With years of experience in the movement of animals around the world, First Point Animal Services worked with the department to develop a unique, world-class resource for the safe transfer of live animals.

This facility—known as a corral—opened in July 2017 and replaces an old outdoor operation at the airport.

The purpose-built facility allows air stalls, staff, boots, clothing and other equipment to be disinfected, and includes magnet locked timed showers for personnel to reduce the risk of diseases such as equine influenza.

The corral itself can be effectively cleaned and disinfected to ensure there is no cross-contamination between consignments.

Unlike the previous outdoor facility, the corral is well-lit, protected from nature’s elements and has rubber flooring to make sure people and horses can’t slip or trip.

The rubber flooring means loading and unloading is much quieter and therefore horses are calmer and safer to work around.

The facility allows biosecurity officers to undertake clearance activities such as the identification and inspection of horses and equipment, and review of health certification.

There is a clear viewing area to inspect horses as they are unloaded and the company provides a dedicated office for biosecurity officers.

Several air stalls can be unloaded at once, dramatically reducing the time it takes to clear a horse through the facility after a long flight.

The facility may also be used for the transfer of cattle, cats, dogs, sheep, goats and alpaca in the future.

First Point Animal Services’ investment in a corral at Melbourne Airport ensures horses and other livestock can continue to be imported in a safe, biosecure manner in accordance with new First Point of Entry Biosecurity Standards.

Without the construction of the facility there was a real prospect that imports may have been interrupted with the introduction of the new standards.

Along with a safer and more biosecure environment for imports, the facility provides the same safety benefits for animals being loaded for export.

First Point Animal Services was nominated for the award by Amy Little from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
Fifty-year sheep farming veteran Geoff Power is a tireless advocate for livestock producers and the issues they face, particularly in the area of biosecurity.

He is extremely passionate about the industry and approaches his work with clarity, wisdom and compassion.

Geoff Power

*Industry category*
Geoff has been a key figure in helping the sheep and wool industry acknowledge the importance of biosecurity and the risk to their livelihood if it is not prioritised.

The grazier from Orroroo, South Australia, has spent 20 years advocating for the industry including as national president, board member and South Australian representative for WoolProducers Australia, and founding board member and president of Livestock SA.

He assisted with training for biosecurity response teams, including simulation activities Exercise Golden Fleece and Exercise Phantom Fox, and has undertaken extensive biosecurity training himself.

He has worked hard to tackle ovine brucellosis, wild dogs and “November disease”, and was a strong advocate for the Livestock Biosecurity Network.

Geoff was a major driving force behind the development of the new One Biosecurity program in South Australia and served for two years as chairman of the Joint Industry-Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) Working Group for the program.

He was closely involved with the design of One Biosecurity, was the first producer in South Australia to test software developed as part of the program and featured in a video production.

His advocacy led to approximately one-third of South Australia’s most active producers using the One Biosecurity on-farm biosecurity plan.

Geoff is known for his energy, persistence and persuasiveness, collaborative approach and excellent communication skills.

This, coupled with his understanding of the broader context and importance of biosecurity activities in Australia and overseas, makes him a real asset to the livestock community.

Geoff is passionate about the sheep and wool industry, and much of the work he has performed over the years has been as a volunteer.

His leadership in biosecurity will have a lasting legacy throughout South Australia and the rest of the country for decades to come.

Geoff was nominated for the award by Roger Paskin from PIRSA Biosecurity SA.
Biosecurity pioneer John McDonald led the creation of a national on-farm biosecurity program for the nursery industry, known as BioSecure HACCP.

BioSecure HACCP is likely to be regarded as a model industry-led biosecurity program in the years ahead.
John developed the concept of BioSecure HACCP more than a decade ago, and his relentless hard work has seen it become a reality for commercial production nurseries across Australia.

Working with state and territory biosecurity agencies throughout its development, John has delivered a program that improves pest management at a farm level, whilst also allowing a business to meet regulatory compliance.

The program is designed to help businesses assess their current and future pest, disease and weed risks and is framed on the principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), a globally-recognised risk management approach that addresses business hazards through anticipation and prevention, rather than end-point inspection and testing.

Businesses can gain BioSecure HACCP certification through implementing specified procedures within the production system followed by two annual, independent audits.

This certification provides formal recognition of a company’s commitment to managing biosecurity on the farm, and also assists businesses in meeting their broader biosecurity obligations and in gaining recognition at a government level for domestic market access.

The national program is led and implemented by industry, in partnership with state and territory biosecurity agencies, and is integrated into production systems on-farm, complementing and supporting Australia’s biosecurity integrity.

BioSecure HACCP was developed ahead of its time, and John is regarded as a pioneer in biosecurity management.

He has made a vast contribution to the functioning of the Australian biosecurity system and is a champion of the nursery industry.

John takes every opportunity to raise the awareness of biosecurity and the benefits of BioSecure HACCP, and brings the highest level of commitment and integrity to his work.

His efforts have not only benefited the diverse commercial nursery industry but will likely result in improved biosecurity risk management in other sectors, with BioSecure HACCP already inspiring a biosecurity model for the horticultural industries.

John was nominated for the award by Andrew Bishop from the Tasmania Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.
Australian bats are less likely to suffer from a fungal disease known as white-nose syndrome thanks to the ongoing efforts by Wildlife Health Australia’s Keren Cox-Witton in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

Tireless work has been undertaken to raise awareness about this exotic disease, prevent its introduction into Australia and prepare for an incursion of the disease.
White-nose syndrome is a disease caused by the cold-loving fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*.

The fatal disease has devastated bat populations in the United States and Canada but the fungus has never been identified in Australia.

In 2015 and 2016, Wildlife Health Australia coordinated a project that saw a team of experts assess the risk of the fungus being introduced into Australia and infecting Australian bats.

The assessment found there is a risk the fungus could enter Australia, most likely on contaminated objects used in affected caves overseas, such as by a caver, researcher or tourist.

While the susceptibility of Australian bat species to white-nose syndrome is not known, it is likely cave-dwelling insectivorous bats in the colder southern parts of Australia could be at risk from the disease. These include the southern bent-winged bat, a critically endangered species, and the eastern bent-winged bat.

Keren worked hard in collaboration with the department to prevent the introduction of white-nose syndrome and better prepare Australia for any incursion of this exotic disease.

This includes the development of response guidelines for an incursion, and advice for those who come into contact with bats on how to recognise and report a suspected case of the disease.

A number of activities were aimed at raising awareness of Australian and visiting cavers about the disease and how to avoid introducing the fungus.

Wildlife Health Australia and the department’s combined efforts provide a model for Australia’s approach to managing the risk of exotic wildlife diseases, and is a great case study of what can be achieved when government and key environment stakeholders work together to address an issue of mutual concern.

Keren was nominated for the award by Rupert Woods from Wildlife Health Australia.
Husqvarna Australia Pty Ltd, Cahill Transport Australia, Panalpina World Transport Pty Ltd

Industry category

Husqvarna Australia, Cahill Transport Australia and Panalpina World Transport joined forces to help prevent red imported fire ants and other pests in shipments of lawn mowers from becoming established.

The three companies worked to identify the source of the invasive species and stop further consignments of affected products.
Forest and garden equipment manufacturer and distributor, Husqvarna Australia, first came to the attention of the department in July 2017 when Cahill Transport reported mould on ISPM-15-stamped timber crates used to package lawn mowers.

The post border detection triggered extra inspections on packaging and containers of other consignments imported from the same US supplier—revealing some serious biosecurity concerns.

Some of the timber crates were not compliant with ISPM-15 standards and were infected with a variety of biosecurity risks including exotic moulds, worms and sawyer beetle larvae.

A container was also found to be infested with red imported fire ants, one of the world’s most invasive pests.

When the ants were discovered in Brisbane in February 2001, it led to one of the largest and most complex responses ever undertaken in response to an exotic pest in Australia.

Prior to the detection in the lawn mower crates there had been no biosecurity issues associated with imports from Husqvarna, and the company’s supply chain manager provided the department with records showing Husqvarna had changed their packaging provider in the US the previous month.

Additional inspections revealed that the issues were only associated with the new packaging.

With help from their brokerage, Panalpina World Transport, Husqvarna provided the department with full details of all consignments.

This included more than 200 shipping containers with the new packaging that were on the water or already distributed nationally.

The company immediately halted the shipping of further products, and every consignment—including those that had already been unpacked and distributed to retailers—required inspection and treatment.

The efforts of Husqvarna Australia, Cahill Transport Australia and Panalpina World Transport played a significant role in ensuring Australia remains free of exotic sawyer beetles and red imported fire ants are not introduced into new areas.

The three companies were nominated for the award by Gunter Ebert from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
Australia’s largest banana farm, Bolinda Estate, was placed under quarantine in July 2017 after a positive test result for the fungal disease TR4.

Mackay Farming Group’s commitment to biosecurity and rigorous existing biosecurity measures meant Bolinda Estate’s packing shed stopped for only two hours after the issue of the quarantine notice—a feat previously considered impossible by many in the industry.
Panama disease tropical race 4 (TR4) scares even the most seasoned banana farmers.

The ineradicable fungal disease is capable of infecting and killing all commercial banana varieties grown in Australia and globally, and can spread in soil, water and infected plant material.

When the condition was detected at Australia’s largest banana farm—a property that sets the benchmark for biosecurity protocols—there was a sense in the industry that any farm could be hit by the disease.

Bolinda Estate, which is managed by cousins Stephen and Gavin Mackay, was placed under quarantine on 12 July 2017 following a positive test result for TR4.

While the infection was only detected on Weary Pocket, the smaller 137ha farm, the entire 461ha farming operation which included Bolinda Estate was included in the Biosecurity Queensland-issued quarantine notice.

The notice meant that there could be no movement of soil or plant material from or between these farms.

The banana fruit itself was safe and could continue to be harvested, packed and sent off-farm under very strict quarantine measures.

Due to the extensive biosecurity protocols already in place, Bolinda Estate’s packing shed stopped packing for only two hours following the quarantine notice.

This was only possible because comprehensive biosecurity measures were already in place on the property, covering the management of farm inputs and outputs, the movement of people, machinery and equipment, feral animal and weed management, staff training, fencing, zoning and more.

Many in the banana industry doubted whether a farm could continue to trade in the presence of TR4, believing practices to prevent the movement of soil and plant material would be too onerous.

It was not easy, but it is a credit to Stephen, Gavin, their staff and the larger Mackay Farming Group that Bolinda Estate has continued to operate under quarantine.

Mackay Farming Group was nominated by Richard Clayton from Mackay’s Banana Marketing.
Rum Jungle Organics

Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year category

After an outbreak of banana freckle devastated the farm’s crops, the biosecurity measures put in place by Rum Jungle Organics are the most comprehensive in the region.

Owners Alan Petersen and Julie-Ann Murphy have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure the Northern Territory banana farm is as safe as possible from pests and diseases, and their detailed biosecurity plan sets the standard for all farming properties.
Alan and Julie-Ann pride themselves on organic and biosecure practices, and the 26ha Rum Jungle Organics property they have owned since 1999 produces some of the finest bananas for local consumption.

But when banana freckle was discovered on the farm in 2013, all banana plants on their property had to be destroyed and disposed of as part of the National Banana Freckle Eradication Program—resulting in virtually no farm income for the past four years.

Despite this enormous setback, the couple did not give up and have instead focused on implementing best practice biosecurity measures as they restore banana production on the farm.

They reviewed their biosecurity measures and used in-depth research to develop a strong, comprehensive biosecurity plan, which is strictly adhered to on the farm.

Alan and Julie-Ann’s plan considers all aspects of farm biosecurity, paying special attention to the minimisation of farm traffic and improving plant soil health.

The plan covers farm inputs and outputs, soil and plant health, people, vehicles and equipment, production practices, feral animals and weeds, as well as training, planning and recording protocols.

While the farm operation is not large, Rum Jungle Organics’ biosecurity measures are as comprehensive as the highest quality farm producers.

Alan and Julie-Ann understand that a small investment in best management practices to minimise pest and disease risks goes a long way towards protecting their livelihood, the broader industry and Australia’s reputation for fresh, high quality produce.

The couple has recently planted a new crop of bananas, following the completion of Phase 3 of the eradication program, and their plants are once again producing top quality fruit for local markets.

Rum Jungle Organics was nominated by Sarah Corcoran from the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Resources.
The Grains Farm Biosecurity Program is celebrating 10 years of success raising awareness of biosecurity among grain growers and helping the industry respond to serious pest incursions.

The program’s grains biosecurity officers have attended more than 1,000 events and made a significant ongoing contribution to Australia’s biosecurity integrity.
With grain production in Australia worth $12 billion a year, the Grains Farm Biosecurity Program is one of the most important industry outreach programs in Australia.

The program is a significant investment in protecting the sustainability of the grains industry, funded by growers through Grain Producers Australia. It was the first industry-based outreach program in Australia with a focus on biosecurity, and paved the way for initiatives including the Livestock Biosecurity Network, the Bee Biosecurity Program and vegetable and potato outreach officers.

The program is run as a partnership between state governments and the grains industry, coordinated by Plant Health Australia. The ongoing commitment of all partners has enabled this program to have a long term focus in improving biosecurity across the sector.

The face of the program—its frontline biosecurity personnel—are the five grains biosecurity officers based in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

These officers raise awareness of biosecurity and provide information on simple steps growers can take to protect their properties from diseases, pests and weeds.

Over the past decade they have developed a range of materials for the industry, distributed thousands of biosecurity signs and become a familiar sight at field days and meetings in clubs and halls around the country.

Grains biosecurity officers also provide direct support in the event of a pest incursion, and were part of the eradication response to khapra beetle, the response to the detection of Russian wheat aphid in 2016, and the eradication of lupin anthracnose in NSW.

The Grains Farm Biosecurity Program has significantly raised biosecurity awareness, with the 2017 Farm Biosecurity Survey showing that more grain growers are able to define biosecurity than producers on average, and the industry has higher than average rates of biosecurity risk management measures in place.

The latest initiative from the program is a pilot Sentinel Silo project, which encourages the monitoring of grain storages and ‘ag-pantries’ for khapra beetle.

The Grains Farm Biosecurity Program was nominated for the award by Greg Fraser from Plant Health Australia.
Lois Ransom has dedicated more than three decades to strengthening Australia’s plant biosecurity system.

Her leadership and influence has been felt around the country and internationally, with roles including Australia’s chief plant protection officer, agricultural counsellor and chair of the governing body of the International Plant Protection Convention.
Lois Ransom started her career in 1986 as a plant pathologist and extension officer with the Tasmanian State Government, working with the vegetable industry and emerging poppy industry. In 1998, she moved to the then Australian Quarantine Inspection Service, initially working in plant quarantine policy.

Lois was posted to Japan in 2000 as one of the department’s first international agricultural counsellors, with responsibility for plants and plant products in Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea.

She assisted with the establishment of the agricultural counsellor network in Asia, which over the last twenty years has played a critical role in allowing diversification of Australia’s trade while protecting the nation’s biosecurity status.

In 2012, Lois was contracted to New Zealand to assist the development of a government industry agreement to manage pests and diseases with the potential to damage New Zealand’s primary industries, economy, and environment.

Lois went on to hold several management roles including an appointment as Australia’s chief plant protection officer from 2004-2012.

During this time, she was instrumental in the implementation of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD), which included responding to several serious plant pest incursions such as the detection of citrus canker in Queensland in 2004.

In 2016, Lois was elected to serve a two-year term as chair of the Commission of Phytosanitary Measures—the governing body of the International Plant Protection Convention—in recognition of her expertise in plant biosecurity, leadership and foresight.

She is also currently leading reforms to plant biosecurity risk management measures in her role as Assistant Secretary of the department’s Plant Import Operations Branch.

Lois’s long and distinguished career has resulted in a substantial legacy of strengthened biosecurity systems for managing the risk that exotic plant pests and diseases pose to Australia.

Lois was nominated by Marion Healy from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.