**English Version (Translation) of Biosecurity Awareness Podcast for Chinese Lunar New Year 2022**

Introduction by Tina:

Hi, everyone, I am Tina. I work for the Biosecurity Division of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment of the Australian Government. We will talk about biosecurity matters and the Chinese Lunar New Year in the following conversation. Being a major festival as it is, the Chinese Lunar New Year here is celebrated by many Chinese-speaking people just like elsewhere around the world. During this festival season large volume of gifts will be brought into Australia via the airport or through the postal channel. But not all gift items are permitted into Australia due to biosecurity risk concerns. In this podcast you will learn some types of gift items that may be prohibited from entering Australia as well as where to get more information on Australian biosecurity matters. Joining me today is my colleague Michael in this podcast.

Thank you, Michael, for being with us. You are based in the International Mail Centre Sydney Gateway Facility. Can you please tell us a bit more about your biosecurity work at the Centre?

Michael:
Hello everyone. I am Michael. I’m based in the International Mail Centre, Sydney. My work is to perform biosecurity risk assessments and inspections of parcels before they are released into Australian communities. Among the many methods we employ to perform our job are Xray screening, physical inspection by officers and sniffing by specially trained biosecurity detector dogs. The primary purpose of our job is to protect the unique environment of Australia from the invasion of exotic pests and diseases, our living environment, tourism as well as agricultural industries.

Tina:
Why do people traveling or sending mails to Australia need to be particularly aware of our Biosecurity conditions? Why is Biosecurity important for Australia?

Michael:
This is a very important question. Many pests and diseases such as Avian Bird Flu, Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever that exist today in other parts of the world do not exist in Australia, and we want to keep it that way. If these pests and diseases are introduced into Australia, Australian tourism and agriculture industries, as well as our living environment will be seriously impacted. In order to protect the unique natural environment of Australia, the Australian government has enacted and implemented very strict Biosecurity laws and regulations. All animal and or plant-derived materials and food items from overseas must undergo biosecurity risk assessments and inspections before entry into Australia. Any materials failing to meet biosecurity conditions will be refused entry into Australia. Biosecurity affects everyone of us. Therefore it is very important for Australia.

Tina:
Are there any particular prohibited items posted to or brought in here for Lunar New Year celebration?

Michael:
Yes. Some of the popular products that people bring in or post to Australia during the lunar new year festival include preserved pork, sausages, other meat products, fresh fruits and vegetables, etc.

Tina:
Why are these items not permitted?
Michael:
Because they are likely to introduce pests and diseases that do not exist today in Australia if they have not been specially treated. According to current Biosecurity Law and regulations, they are prohibited from entering into Australia.

Tina:
What happens when these items arrive in Australia through the mail? are they disposed of or send back?

Michael:
How to treat these products depend on the biosecurity risks and the levels of risks they are associated with. It may be immediate destruction on site, or return to the country of origin. If they can be treated, we will offer treatments. After treatments the goods may be released. The costs of treatment will be borne by the consignee.

Tina:
If someone brings in biosecurity risk items through the airport, can they be penalized?

Michael:
Once it is established that incoming passengers have not honestly declared in the Incoming Passenger cards and or knowingly or wilfully conceal biosecurity risk items, they may be fined up to $2,664 on the spot, depending on the levels of breaches. In some serious cases, offenders’ visas may be cancelled and they may be deported out of Australia. If they are Australian citizens, offenders may be subject to criminal judicial proceedings. Once being proven guilty, they may end up being fined up to $1,100,000 and or jailed for 10 years of imprisonment.

Tina:
What are the benefits for people if they follow Biosecurity conditions?

Michael:
If incoming passengers make honest declarations or only bring in items that are without biosecurity risks, they may avoid the risks of being fined, or being subject to judicial proceedings, or avoid getting their visas being cancelled. They may clear custom smoothly or receive their luggage or parcels quickly.

Tina:
What should people do to ensure they follow our conditions and receive their gifts?

Michael:
The following are critically important: Firstly, one must honestly declare on the Incoming Passenger Card or the Customs Declaration and Dispatch Note what are brought in or posted to Australia. If you are not sure about the questions on the Incoming Passenger Card, it’s better to tick ‘Yes’. Secondly, please put all the food items into one bag. This will help facilitate biosecurity inspection.Thirdly and most importantly, before going to the airport or post office, please go to our websitewww.awe.gov.au/biconand type in the names of items that you want to bring in or post. It will tell you the import requirements for the items you want to bring in or post. Bicon is an acronym for biosecurity import conditions.Alternatively, you may call 1800-900-090.

Tina:
Is there anything else you would like to tell people about biosecurity?

Michael:
Finally I would like to point out most of the gift items brought in or posted to Australia are available in the shops in Australia. Under normal circumstances imported animal or plant products available for sale in Australia have already gone through biosecurity risk assessments and or treatments.

Tina:

Thank you, Michael. And thank you, everyone for listening to this podcast. Please keep yourself more aware of biosecurity matters during this Lunar New Year festival season. For more information, please go on our website www. biosecurity.gov.au

We wish everyone of you a Happy Lunar New Year.

Thank you again and good-bye.