# Biosecurity Detector Dog Program video transcript

Since 1992, biosecurity detector dogs have actively contributed to Australia’s frontline defence against damaging biosecurity risks.

From just a pair of dogs in Sydney and Brisbane, to dogs deployed across the country, from Perth to Norfolk Island – the program has grown considerably.

Although the department initially used Beagles, Labradors now make up the entire canine workforce. Their extraordinary sense of smell and cooperative, gentle nature make them top-notch detectors.

Our Labs are trained to detect over 200 items that pose a biosecurity risk.

The most common items being seeds, meat, live plants and fruit.

The dogs detect more than 65,000 biosecurity risk items each year with individual dogs making more than 9000 detections in their working life.

These detections provide critical protection for our $60 billion dollar agricultural industries and the health of our communities, economy, environment and unique wildlife.

A single piece of undeclared fruit or a meat product, can carry serious and devastating risks.

The detector dog program works side-by-side with other government departments and officials, including their canine compatriots from the Australian Border Force.

You can tell the difference by the bright red jackets worn by our biosecurity detector dogs.

At the international airport passenger terminal, our dogs may sit beside a passenger or baggage. This is called a ‘passive detection’.

A passive response is given a food reward.

Make sure you know what is in your bags as our Labs will sniff out everything from large food items to the smallest of seeds.

When screening objects in mail facilities the dogs will dig at the source of a target odour. This is called an ‘active detection’. An active response is given a play reward.

We select our detector dogs from the Australian Border Force breeding program. The puppies are fostered by volunteer families until they are around 18 months old, when they are selected for work with the ABF, Australian Federal Police or with us, combatting biosecurity threats.

We put the young dogs through a rigorous eight-week in-house training program. From there, the dogs have a working life of about six to eight years.

When they retire from their biosecurity role they are placed into loving homes—in many cases with one of their former handlers.

We continue to modernise and evolve our detector dog program as part of an integrated biosecurity system.

Biosecurity it’s everyone’s responsibility.