Air Express Carrier Fees

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) screens all imported cargo for quarantine risk material. AQIS charges fees to cover the expense of operating these quarantine services. The fee depends on the way the consignment is presented to AQIS for inspection and the type of service provided.

AQIS uses a number of methods to assess the quarantine risk of all imported air consignments. These methods include checking documents, x-ray screening and detector dogs.

After these assessments, around 98 per cent of imported air consignments are released without requiring a physical inspection or additional costs to the importer.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. My consignment has been inspected by AQIS but no item of quarantine concern was found. Why has the carrier charged me a ‘Quarantine Processing Fee’?

Consignments may be inspected when there is potential quarantine risk material present or where there is insufficient documentation to assess the risk. If no quarantine risk material is detected, the goods are released from quarantine without further treatment.

Carriers generally book AQIS officers for a block of time and present multiple consignments for inspections during that period. AQIS officers invoice the carriers for the inspection time, which, on an average, equates to around $17 per consignment.

Your carrier may invoice you to cover the AQIS costs, plus their own administration charges (often described on their invoices as a ‘Quarantine Processing Fee’). You may wish to contact your carrier for an explanation of any non-AQIS fees that have been charged.

If you would like to know more about AQIS fees, please visit: AQIS Fees and Charges.

2. My consignment has been inspected by AQIS and no item of quarantine concern is found. Why have I been charged a fee of around $70-$170 by AQIS?

The vast majority of air cargo consignment documents are lodged electronically. However, documents are sometimes presented at AQIS offices for manual processing e.g. for urgent clearance and/or when the value of goods is greater than $1000. AQIS charges for manual processing include a lodgement fee of $15 or an upgrade fee ($25) plus a document assessment fee of $40 where a new entry is required.

After the documents are assessed, some consignments are released without any additional AQIS fee.

However, some consignments may be directed for physical inspection. This is usually due to the possible presence of quarantine risk material and/or lack of supporting documentation to assess the risk. These consignments incur an inspection fee (in addition to the lodgement or upgrade and document assessment fees). For one officer, the minimum in-office inspection fee is $40 or out-of-office inspection fee is $90 (when quarantine officers need to travel for an inspection). After inspection, if no quarantine risk material is detected, goods are usually released from quarantine without further treatment. For these inspected consignments, AQIS issues a quarantine direction to your carrier with a breakdown of fees and charges. For more information on AQIS fees, please visit: AQIS Fees and Charges.

The carrier might also include their administration fees and describe the total amount as ‘Quarantine Processing Fee’. You may wish to contact your carrier for an explanation of any non-AQIS fees that have been charged and for a breakdown of AQIS fees.
3. My consignment has been inspected by AQIS and an item/consignment has been treated, destroyed or exported. The carrier has invoiced a fee which is unexpectedly high. Why?

If an item of high risk quarantine concern is found on inspection, the item may need to be treated to address the quarantine risk. Treatments may include gamma irradiation, fumigation, heat, cold, disinfection or cleaning or the item may need to be destroyed by incineration or deep burial or exported back to country of origin. Before directing the item for a particular treatment, destruction or export, AQIS seeks the importer's agreement or agreement from the carrier on behalf of the importer to a preferred treatment option. The amount of fee charged by AQIS depends on the option chosen by the importer/carrier and the type of service performed by AQIS.

You may wish to contact your carrier to obtain a breakdown of AQIS fees or for an explanation of non-AQIS fee.

4. My consignment has been delayed, damaged or has an item missing. Why?

Carriers are responsible to:
- declare or lodge proper documents to AQIS
- advise AQIS about preferred option (e.g. presenting supporting documentation, inspection, treatment, export or destruction)
- make an appointment for quarantine inspection
- present the consignment with a quarantine concern (including opening the consignment) to AQIS for inspection
- organise treatment, destruction or export
- deliver the consignment to the importer after it has been released from quarantine.

As the carriers are responsible for above actions, you may wish to contact your carrier in the first instance to seek an explanation of your query. If you are not satisfied with the carrier's explanation or need further clarification, please contact AQIS on 1800 020 504 (free call from land phone within Australia) and ask for an Air Cargo representative.

5. Where can I get more information?

Before ordering or importing an item from overseas, please you refer to the What Can't Be Mailed to Australia. The AQIS Import Condition database (ICON) describes import conditions of any particular item. If you're an international student it's important to tell your friends and family overseas about Australia’s quarantine laws and ask them not to send prohibited food, plant material and animal products.

Fees and charges are regularly reviewed.