

Moving to Australia or Importing Personal Effects/Household Goods

Personal effects and household items are the unaccompanied items transported into Australia, by a returning resident or a new resident of Australia, via sea or air freight.

To import items under the tariff code for personal effects, you must be arriving from a place outside Australia, and the items must be your personal property that you owned while overseas.

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Why is DAFF interested in personal effects and household goods?

Australia's unique environment and important agricultural industries are free from many pests and diseases found in other parts of the world. However, the movement of personal effects can create a pathway for the introduction of exotic pests or diseases.

For example, outdoor furniture could conceal timber pests, or be contaminated with soil that contains pathogens or exotic weed seeds, not currently found in Australia. Animal products such as meat, eggs, milk or cheese could contain diseases that can be transmitted to humans and other animals. Ornaments decorated with animal or plant products, or seeds could introduce a disease pathogen. Similarly, food residues and used fruit or egg cartons can harbor unseen pests and/or pathogens.

All consignments of personal effects entering Australia are subject to some form of quarantine intervention before they can be released. Because of the risks associated with personal effects, you must advise DAFF of specific items in your consignment. If deemed necessary, DAFF will undertake an inspection of your goods. If required DAFF may ask that some items are treated before they can be released. If treatment is not possible DAFF may seize and destroy prohibited items, or ask that they be exported out of Australia.

Common items of quarantine concern

The first rule to remember is that DAFF will be interested in any item that **originated from an animal or a plant** (including timber), or **contains part of an animal or a plant**.

The second rule to remember is that DAFF will also be interested in any item that has been **in contact with animals, plants, water, food or soil**.

Please view the list of common items of quarantine concern. This list is designed to assist you when you are packing your goods up room by room.

Common items of quarantine concern in personal effects list

Prohibited goods

DAFF will not permit the importation of the following items as personal effects:

- fresh fruit and vegetables
- live plants and bulbs
- prohibited and restricted seeds
- unidentified seeds, which can include some foods, including spices
- live animals (including pets) that require an import permit
- biological products including some plant based, herbal medications
- unprocessed goods of plant or animal origin
- soiled items, or items containing organic residues
- items knowingly infested with pests or a disease.

If you are in doubt of an item and want to determine if the item is prohibited by DAFF, check the [DAFF import conditions database—ICON](#)

By searching ICON you can find if an item is permitted entry into Australia, whether it requires an import permit or treatment, or if there are any additional quarantine concerns.

You can also type 'personal effects' into the ICON search function to obtain specific information relating to importing personal effects.

Other useful information can be found on the [What can't I take into Australia web page](#) and [What can't be mailed to Australia web page](#).

What should I do when packing?

Preparation is an important key to packing up your household goods to ensure a successful move. When packing, take the time to prepare household goods for DAFF inspection upon arrival.

CLEAN YOUR GOODS!

Before packing, DAFF requires that any items that have been in contact with food, soil, plants, animals, or their products, are thoroughly cleaned and free from any contamination.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- all used equipment and machinery – drain all standing water, and ensure the equipment is free from contamination
- garden furniture, tools and implements – make sure all soil, animal and plant debris are removed and all surfaces are thoroughly cleaned
- animal bedding and grooming equipment – wash and vacuum animal bedding, and clean grooming equipment to ensure all residual pet hair has been removed
- waste bins, brooms, vacuum cleaners – make sure all waste is removed and the equipment is thoroughly cleaned
- fresh water sporting equipment – make sure reservoirs are completely drained and dry, and that equipment is dry on arrival, including wetsuits, gumboots and fishing tackle.

Other tips:

- Check surfaces of your timber items for any signs of insect infestation (sawdust-like powder, fresh holes, chewed timber or tunnels).
- If you find signs of insect infestation, consider either not bringing the item, or treating it for the timber pests prior to shipment.
- Kitchen goods – do not pack half opened packages of dry foods, herbs and spices that may be harboring insect pests that are difficult to see.
- Consider whether you really need to ship any natural plant or animal product that has not undergone some form of manufacturing process. These items may need expensive treatments, at your own cost, to mitigate quarantine risks on arrival in Australia. Cheap tourist souvenirs made of untreated plant or animal products, subsequently requiring treatments in Australia, can end up costing more than you would expect.

Safety

To ensure the safety of everyone involved in the movement of your goods, please:

- securely wrap the blades of any knives or sharp instruments, or any glass or ceramic items
- insulate boxes containing fragile items
- do not pack flammable items such as fireworks, aerosols, solvents, paint thinners, etc.

It is important to also label your boxes correctly to identify those cartons containing medical items, dangerous goods, or any items that may compromise the safety of people handling your goods.

Packing list

When packing your personal effects, prepare a list that includes all the items in your consignment. This should include clear labeling, for example 'Box 1 of 12', and a list of items contained in each box. This list will be required by the authorities in Australia.

Take time to consider the items the DAFF biosecurity officer may be interested in. Pack these items together and put them in boxes separate to those that you consider clearly not to be of quarantine concern. For example, ensure quarantine items such as footwear, food items or garden tools are packed together.

If you are bringing food items, show on the packing list where the food items have been packed or what containers the food items have been packed in.

Used packing boxes

Some second hand boxes that were intended for other uses may pose a risk to quarantine.

Do not use any packing boxes that have already been in contact with an organic substance such as cartons or inserts used previously with fruit, meat, eggs, flowers or pot plants, or fertiliser bags.

Do not use straw, sawdust, wood shavings or any other plant material as packing or filler.

Previous labeling

If second hand boxes are being used, the chances are that they have old numbering or labeling on them. To avoid confusion which may lead to misunderstandings or delays, ensure that any previous labeling on your packing boxes is covered or removed completely. Make sure you use a permanent marker/felt pen to write on boxes in preference to labels that can fall off in transit.

Numbering of boxes

It is important that the numbers on packing boxes match with the numbers on the packing list. Only write one number for each box or large item. Also, number similar items consecutively, for example 3 children's bikes could be numbered as 56, 57 and 58 etc.

How do I clear my goods through quarantine?

You can clear your goods yourself, or you can use an agent or representative to clear your goods.

Here are some terms you may encounter:

- A customs broker will facilitate the clearance of your goods through customs and quarantine.
- A freight forwarding company will be used to transport your goods.
- A bond store or depot is a storage facility where personal effects can be stored pending clearance.
- A High Volume Specialist Operator (HVS0), or moving company, can specialize in the movement of personal effects, and sometimes offer a total movement and clearance service from start to finish.

Quarantine fees and charges

Quarantine fees associated with the clearance of personal effects can be found on the [DAFF fees and charges for import clearance web page](#).

Quarantine fees that you will be required to pay up front include the creation of a manual quarantine entry and documentation screening charges. Depending on the region you are having your goods processed in, you may be required to pay a minimum ½ hour up front inspection fee.

Quarantine inspection fees are based on a ½ hour unit of inspection time. Your final quarantine inspection fee will be dependent on the time it takes for a DAFF officer to inspect your goods. Additional charges will apply if your goods require treatment prior to release.

Check with your removalist company or freight forwarder that your goods have been delivered to a quarantine approved depot. Depending on who you use, or if you clear the goods yourself, additional charges may apply. These may include a facilitation fee that includes port charges, transport, administration and container unpacking costs. A depot holding your goods may also charge storage fees. These fees may be termed 'quarantine fees' on your invoice.

Note: Special requirements apply to clearing personal effects that belong to either military or diplomatic personnel.

Ensure you discuss the fees and charges that apply to your consignment with your agent.

Documentary clearance

1. Consult the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service fact sheet on unaccompanied personal effects which has some very useful information about the personal effects clearance process. It can be found on the [Customs website](#).
2. Complete an Unaccompanied Effects Statement (B534 form), which is available on the [Customs website](#). If you would like this form in a language other than English, call 1300 363 263 (in Australia) or + 61 2 6275 6666 (outside Australia), or email information@customs.gov.au. You can also obtain this form from your customs broker, or any Customs office in Australia. There are penalties for providing false or misleading information on this form.
3. Once you have received notification (usually by mail) from your freight forwarder that your goods are available for clearance, collect a delivery order from the forwarder.
4. Visit the [Australian Customs and Border Protection Service office](#) in your state, with your documentation and arrange customs clearance of your goods.
5. If Customs wish to retain your copy of the [Unaccompanied Effects Statement](#) (B534 form), ensure you obtain a copy for clearance through quarantine.
6. If someone else will be clearing your goods they will need to sign a statutory declaration indicating that they are doing so on your behalf.
7. Visit your [local DAFF office](#) to present the following documents:
 - your packing list
 - your completed Unaccompanied Effects Statement (B534 form)
 - your Bill of Lading or Air Way Bill
 - delivery order
 - your statutory declaration (if required)
 - any valid offshore treatment certificates.
8. DAFF will examine your packing list for items of quarantine concern and may ask questions about your goods. Items of potential quarantine risk will require an inspection. Goods coming from countries with identifiable quarantine risks may require a higher level of inspection. After examining your documentation a DAFF biosecurity officer will notify you of your inspection requirements.

Inspection

1. Should your personal effects require inspection, a Quarantine Entry (a legal document issued under the *Quarantine Act 1908*) will be created at a cost and you will need to make an appointment for the inspection.
2. At the inspection you (or your agent) will be required to open and unpack your consignment. Tools such as crowbars and hammers must be provided by yourself or your agent to conduct the inspection. In your/your agents presence, a DAFF biosecurity officer will inspect your goods.
3. Documentation charges for a manual quarantine entry and inspection of your goods will be charged as per the DAFF fees and charges schedule for import clearance as detailed on the [DAFF website](#).

4. Following inspection, if nothing of quarantine concern has been found, your goods may be released. You are responsible for arranging the transportation of your goods once they have been cleared.
5. If items of quarantine concern are found and cannot be released immediately, your options will include, at your expense:
 - treating the item, providing a suitable treatment is available
 - destroying the item, or
 - exporting the item from Australia.

Quarantine treatments

1. If treatment is an option, you or your representative may be asked to sign a letter of authority to treat, authorizing the treatment to proceed.
2. Treatments can include:
 - steam cleaning or washing to remove soil contamination (Note: a second inspection is required in these cases)
 - fumigation gas treatment to kill live insect pests in timber items, or untreated timber
 - gamma irradiation treatment for items with risk material that cannot be removed,
 - heat treatment to devitalize plant material including bark.
3. If a treatment is required, you must use a quarantine approved treatment provider who will apply the charge directly to you, or through the depot facilitating the treatment service.

How can I keep costs down?

Quarantine inspection charges are based on the amount of time it takes to inspect your consignment. You can keep costs to a minimum by:

- following the advice on the DAFF website
- not packing anything that is prohibited entry into Australia
- not packing anything that will require a treatment of some kind, unless that item is of particular significance and you are willing to pay treatment fees
- ensuring your packing list is accurate and clearly identifies contents and matches the numbered boxes
- packing items subject to quarantine inspection in the same box
- clearly identifying boxes that may contain items of quarantine concern
- ensuring that items that have been in contact with animals, plants and soil are thoroughly cleaned and free of quarantine risk material before they are packed. DAFF officers will still be required to have a look at them to check them for any quarantine risk material and subsequent treatment.

Further information

For information about a specific consignment of personal effects, contact your **local DAFF office**.

For general quarantine enquiries about importing personal effects please contact:

DAFF Air and Sea Cargo Program

For general Customs enquiries about importing personal effects, contact the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service:

Phone: 1300 363 263 (within Australia only) or +61 2 6275 6666 (outside Australia)

Email: **information@customs.gov.au**

Website: **www.customs.gov.au**