



Department of
Agriculture and Food
QUARANTINE WA



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Sniffing out trouble



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Quarantine WA uses detector dogs to assist inspectors in finding undeclared quarantine risk items. Because of their highly sensitive nose, a trained detector dog can smell items such as fruit and vegetables, honey, seeds, cut flowers, bees, reptiles, birds, plants and plant materials, even if they are packed in sealed containers or hidden on a person's body.

Many of the dogs have come from animal shelters and are trained by professional training organisations.

The dogs which have direct contact with passengers at Perth Domestic Airport are described as 'passive' detector dogs because, when they detect a target odour in someone's bag, they simply sit to indicate the find to their handler.

Originally, beagles were chosen for this job because they remain calm even in crowded situations and, because they are quite small, they are not seen as threatening by people.

However, a recent recruit for this role is a three year old labrador, which has a very positive reaction from the public and has already detected hundreds of kilograms of prohibited items.

So called 'active' detector dogs may be any breed or cross breed. They work behind the scenes searching through freight arrivals at the airport, the rail terminal and checking parcels at mail depots. They are trained to paw or nuzzle a package which contains a target odour – hence the term 'active'.

**For enquiries telephone
Freecall 1800 084 881
or visit www.agric.wa.gov.au/quarantine**