

Quarantine Matters! at Bengali New Year Festival

By Syrenes Lu and Louise Bonny

Boishakhi Mela, the Bengali New Year Festival, drew almost 10,000 people to Sydney's Olympic Park Athletics Centre last Saturday. The festival provided AQIS with the perfect opportunity to show the local Bengali community why Quarantine Matters! More..

AQIS NSW, Bengali-speaking officer Akm Rahman and public relations officer Louise Bonny attended the lively celebrations focused on their mission to educate festival-goers about the importance of quarantine.

Quarantine officers at Sydney's international airport and mail centre often seize items such as sweets containing milk, seeds, and fresh fruit and vegetables from Bengali passengers and mail. These items could be harbouring a number of quarantine risks, including foot-and-mouth disease, citrus canker and other plant pathogens.



Kachagolla – imported sweets containing dairy, which could introduce foot-and-mouth disease.

The AQIS stand displayed a range of Bangladeshi dairy sweets such as chom chom, kachagolla, rasgulla, shandesh and peara. These are commonly seized by AQIS, and festival-goers learnt about the danger these sweet, milky treats may hold for Australia's livestock industries.



Bengali visitors get quarantine tips for their next overseas trip.

Sydney's Bengali New Year Festival is now in its thirteenth year, this year's celebration marking AQIS' first appearance at the event.

The festival aims to make meaningful contributions to the intellectual, social and cultural enrichment of the Sydney community. AQIS received excellent feedback from the Bengali community during the festival.

Many visitors to the stand were unaware of the quarantine risks associated with products such as dairy sweets, fresh fruit, vegetables and seeds. They were happy to take copies of AQIS factsheets and brochures – information that could prevent a serious disease outbreak in Australia.