PLANT BIOSECURITY
science foundation

Celebrating the International Year of Plant Health with the NSW DPI Biosecurity Warrior.

Final Report (PBSF026)

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Contents

1. Executive Summary

For the International Year of Plant Health, and National Science Week, NSW DPI celebrated plant health and biosecurity with their mascot the Biosecurity Warrior. A custom webpage and free activity pack were developed to engage kids across the state on the importance of plants and how they (and their parents) can become biosecurity warriors and protect our plants.

The activity packs included an activity book on plant health and how biosecurity protects us, a magnet promoting the plant biosecurity reporting hotline, a macro lens for helping you take great pictures of suspicious pests and diseases, a warrior bandana, stickers and lollies.

The website explored a sick tomato plant, learning about the different organisms that cause plant disease and what you can do at home to help protect your backyard plants. The resources created for the page have already been useful when producing other educational materials and we hope to build on this foundation to create a complete education tool on plant, animal and ecosystem health and how good biosecurity practices help us protect them – at the government, industry and backyard level.

2. Introduction

2020 saw a unique opportunity to promote Plant Biosecurity as it was declared the International Year of Plant Health but the United Nations Council.

NSW DPI is an important part of the plant biosecurity framework and has undertaking awareness campaigns previously with the creation of the Biosecurity Warrior cartoon.

We had planned an event in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, (RBG) to coincide with Science Week (August 15 - 22 2020). The event was to showcase DPI biosecurity scientists and have several activities to engage and educate children and adults on plant health, plant biosecurity and general biosecurity duty. These activities were to be run as “Biosecurity Warrior” training with the children receiving Biosecurity Warrior activity pack on completion.

All physical events at RBG, including Science Week activities, were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. To overcome this, the RBG (partnered with the Australian Museum) created a website to host Science Week content online for August - September.

Instead of one physical event, we had a unique opportunity to deliver visually appealing, interactive, professional and adaptable web content that would raise awareness of the importance of plant health and general biosecurity duty, improving biosecurity best practice of the general public.

This required additional funds. Leveraging the APBSF funds I was able to secure support from The Crawford Fund and matched funds from NSW DPI.

The Biosecurity Warrior packs were produced with additional support from the Australasian Plant Pathology Society and distributed through post and central west libraries.

3. Aim

To produce digital education resources and activity packs aimed at raising awareness of the importance of plant health and plant biosecurity.

4. Methods/Process

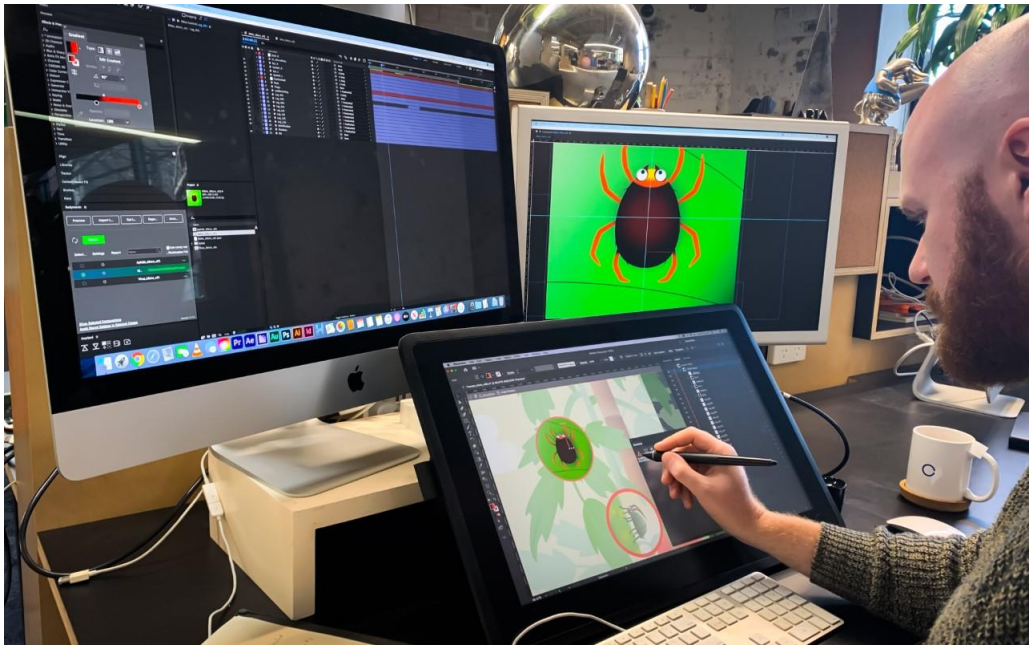
Working with NSW DPI communications I wrote and designed the activity book, stickers, biosecurity hotline magnet and tote bags for the activity packs. The company Sticky Lollies in Sydney was contracted to produce 24kg of promotional lollies. Plant Health Australia were able to sell us 1,000 smart phone macro lenses (at cost) which greatly added to the value of the packs to our audience.

Packs were distributed online through Eventbrite, with a charge to cover postage. Social media and direct emailing to potentially interested groups (schools, community gardens, Landcare) was used to promote the packs.

Additionally I partnered with the Science Hub of Orange, Cowra and Cabonne to produce scientist video profiles, and host webinars with the presenters, focusing on plant health and biosecurity. These videos were used to cross-promote the biosecurity warrior content.

5. Achievements, Impacts and Outcomes

- Biosecurity warrior webpage on plant health and plant biosecurity aimed at children aged 8-12. The webpage was hosted on the Royal Botanic Gardens/Australian Museum Sydney Science Trail website from August 15 – September 15. The webpage is no longer hosted on the Sydney Science Trail but can be viewed here - https://biosecurity-warrior.demo.circul8.com.au/ - until March 2021.



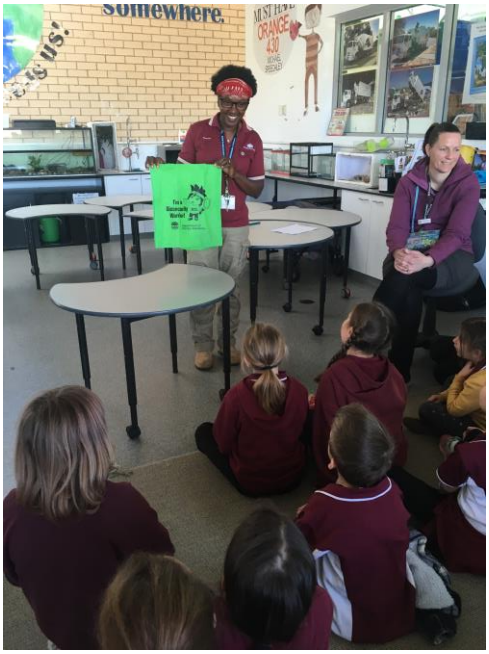
Studio Hackett Animator working in mite illustration

Biosecurity Warrior activity packs - these packs complemented the webpage and were distributed via postage and pickup at central west libraries. We are still distributing packs.

The numbers as of 20.10.2020 are:

The ordering page has 1090 views with 139 orders for a total of 199 packs distributed.

- 100 packs were also sent to schools in the ACT
- 160 packs were sent to school holiday programs
- 50 packs were sent to remote communities (Lake Cowal Foundation, West Wyalong; Booberoi Creek Water User Landholders, Euabalong; Down The Track Youth Program – Lower Lachlan Community Services, Lake Cargelligo; Jasper Road Public School Arbour (School Garden) Program; Murrin Bridge Community Development Program (Garden), Lake Cargelligo/Murrin Bridge)



The warrior packs included custom lollies bearing the IYPH and NSW waratah logos. These were made by Australian company sticky lollies, this company live streams their lollies being made, and 77,600 people have watched our order. They mention the year of plant health and the importance of biosecurity several times throughout the video.

https://www.facebook.com/110849845606715/videos/1009782262813301/

Biosecurity scientist profile videos. Short videos covering the work of NSW DPI /DPIE plant health scientists, these included:

- Dr Toni Chapman - Bacteriologist, NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
- Elizabeth Frost - Bee Specialist, NSW DPI
- Dr Angus Carnegie - Forest pathology, NSW DPI
- Shannon Mulholland - Plant virologist, NSW DPI
- Dr Polychronis Rempoulakis - Leader Plant Biosecurity Entomology, NSW DPI
- Dr Jordan Bailey – Leader Plant Pathology Curation, NSW DPI
- Peter Gillespie – Insect Collections Curator, NSW DPI
- Megan Hinds - Threatened species Officer, NSW Parks & Wildlife.

These videos can be viewed at www.thecorridorproject.org/science-hub

Across our activities we have engaged over 1,700 people directly on the topic of plant health and plant biosecurity.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Given the change to the format and the time-frame for production these activities were a great success. It was difficult not having that face-to-face interaction with the public as I find it is very beneficial when stressing the importance of the work we do.

We still reached a reasonable number of people across the various activities and hopefully changed some minds and inspired some warriors.

These activities have produced a number of educational resources that we will use into the future to promote Plant Biosecurity, hopefully building on them to create a larger digital education tool.

7. Recommendations

The webpage worked well as a simple introduction to plant health but I want to expand on this resource and develop a more in depth digital education space that can be used in schools as part of our biosecurity education program.

This will need engagement from the DPI education team to develop the resources in accordance with school curriculum. We will also need significantly more funding for development of the resource (illustration, animation, wording, and interactive elements).

I am working with DPI communications and DPI education to put together a project brief. The existing webpage and activity pack will be of great help to demonstrate what we can do in this space to educate the next generation of biosecurity warriors.

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