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Shipping Container Contamination

Attention	**Industry**	All enterprises that handle shipping containers in the export chain.
	AQIS	Central and Regional offices ATMs OPVs and Meat inspection staff EFOs
Affected Markets		All
Further Information		Peak Industry Body AICCC – Hart Krtschil – 02 9700 7522 AQIS – Murli Baker-Gabb – 02 6272 4799

Background

Recent detections of vineyard/pointed snails on shipping containers arriving in the United States (US) from Australia have led to increased rates of physical inspection of shipping containers. Containers from Melbourne or Adelaide arriving in certain US ports now face 100% physical inspection on account of the risk that they may be contaminated with snails or other Quarantine Risk Material (QRM). Containers found to be contaminated are rejected by the US port authorities.

AQIS is currently working with the US authorities in order to seek more appropriate inspection arrangements and more favourable treatment of Australian containers found to be contaminated with snails or other QRM. However, for this to occur, Australian industry must demonstrate to the US that the issue of container contamination is being appropriately managed. Specifically, industry needs to implement strategies to manage the risk of snails and other QRM contaminating shipping containers in the export chain.

While it is currently only certain Australian load and US discharge ports that are specifically affected by the issue of vineyard/pointed snail contamination, all areas of the Australian export chain and trade to all export destinations have the potential to be negatively affected by shipping containers contaminated with QRM. Therefore, it is in the interest of all members of the Australian export industry to take measures to address this issue.

Action

Snails and other QRM have the potential to contaminate shipping containers at all stages of the "export logistics chain" (the chain). Accordingly, it is in the interest of all parties handling containers in chain to manage this risk. Some links within the chain will represent a higher risk of

contamination than others. However, if all links within the chain are attentive to this issue then the potential for problems to arise is greatly reduced.

Following is a list of some considerations that are relevant to this issue. The list is not exhaustive, but represents a useful starting point when considering ways in which the chances of container contamination may be minimised.

- Is the container checked for contamination immediately upon receipt from the previous enterprise that handled it? For instance at the initial of pick up from a Container Park.
- Is there the potential for contamination of the container before it is delivered to the next enterprise in the export chain? For instance, is the container placed on the ground by a transport company at its facility prior to delivery to the packing location?
- Where the potential for contamination exists, can measures be implemented that would minimise the risks? Possible measures include placing containers on hard stands away from sources of potential contamination, pest baiting programs, leaving the container on the truck where possible, etc.
- Is the container inspected for contamination and, if required, cleaned prior to delivery to the next enterprise in the export chain? Inspection for contamination should include all six sides of the container.
- In instances where contamination is identified at the point of container receipt, are procedures in place to provide feedback to the previous enterprise regarding this contamination?
- What measures are in place to investigate/respond to container contamination concerns raised by the next enterprise in the export chain?

As indicated above, contamination can occur at any stage in the export chain. Therefore, it is important for all stages of the export chain from the empty container park, through the various transport companies, packing establishments, freight forwarders, depots, rail heads, port operators and shipping companies to be aware of this issue and take measures to address the risk of container contamination with QRM.

AQIS recommends to each party handling the container that where no visual inspection currently exits prior to despatch to the next enterprise, a pre-despatch inspection process should be promptly implemented and that contaminated containers should be cleaned before despatch to the next enterprise.