



28 February 2020

Animal Biosecurity Advice 2020-A02

Proposed interim import conditions for uncooked prawns and prawn products imported for human consumption into Australia

This Biosecurity Advice notifies stakeholders of the proposal by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to implement interim import conditions for uncooked prawns and prawn products imported into Australia for human consumption from 1 July 2020.

The department invites your comments on this proposal by 28 April 2020. Comments can be submitted by email at Prawnreview@agriculture.gov.au.

Whilst conducting the *Review of the biosecurity risks of prawns imported into Australia for human consumption* (the review) the department has identified an unacceptable biosecurity risk associated with the prawn pathogen, *Enterocytozoon hepatopenaei* (EHP). Additional risk management measures are considered necessary to ensure ongoing trade in uncooked prawns meets Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP).

In addition to meeting all existing import conditions, the department is proposing changes that require all uncooked prawns imported from all countries be deveined (removal of the digestive tract until at least the final shell segment of the prawn) during processing. Deveining is considered to be the most effective and practical measure to allow ongoing trade while the review is underway, and to manage the biosecurity risk of EHP to a level that meets Australia's ALOP.

The proposed interim import conditions for uncooked prawns are outlined in the attached '*Biosecurity requirements for the importation of prawns and prawn products for human consumption*' (**Attachment A – Sections 2.2-2.3**).

The proposed changes to uncooked prawn import conditions do not apply to cooked, highly-processed, breaded, battered and crumbed (BBC) or Australian-origin prawns processed through the department-approved Thai Union facility.

The department has determined that interim import conditions for uncooked prawns are required to manage the biosecurity risks associated with *Enterocytozoon hepatopenaei* (EHP). Australia's current import conditions for uncooked prawns (including freezing and head and shell removal) do not manage biosecurity risk for EHP to a level that meets Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP).

The department has proposed these changes to import conditions for uncooked prawns following an assessment of information gathered during the *Review of the biosecurity risks of prawns imported into Australia for human consumption* (the review). There is no known published research indicating that EHP spores in the digestive tract of imported prawns would be inactivated through exposure to commercial freezing, storage and transport temperatures (i.e. -18°C to -20°C). Recent research also

indicates that sufficient loads of EHP spores can be present in the digestive tract of EHP-infected prawns to infect susceptible species exposed through natural transmission pathways (e.g. cannibalism).

The department recommends that a mandatory processing step be implemented for imported uncooked prawns. Deveining is considered the most effective and practically implementable interim measure for reducing the load of viable EHP spores in infected prawns.

Pending consideration of comments received during the 60 day consultation period, the department proposes that uncooked prawns arriving in Australia from 1 July 2020 must be certified by the competent authority of the exporting country to have been deveined (removal of the digestive tract that remains along the dorsal ridge of each prawn to at least the last shell segment). Once the proposed interim import conditions are implemented, only prawn consignments that are verified to have undergone acceptable deveining, and that meet all other requirements for uncooked prawns, will be released from biosecurity control.

Following the consultation period, Australia's trading partners will need to provide a revised health certificate to the department for approval. Trading partners are encouraged to implement required certification changes in a timely manner to prevent disruptions to trade from 1 July 2020. A further Biosecurity Advice will be issued following the consultation period.

Once implemented, the proposed import conditions for uncooked prawns would remain 'interim' while Australia finalises the review, which was announced by Australia's Director of Biosecurity on 16 May 2017 (Biosecurity Advice 2017/07; agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/memos/ba2017-07).

Australia has also issued a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Notification to the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Committee to inform its trading partners of the proposed interim import conditions for uncooked prawns, including a link to Australia's model health certificate with proposed updated wording (**Attachment B**).

This Biosecurity Advice is available via the department's website: agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/memos. Please pass this notice to other interested parties.

The department's prawn import policy team is the first point of contact and can be contacted at Prawnreview@agriculture.gov.au.

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