

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
BIOSECURITY SERVICE**

**IMPORTATION AND CLEARANCE OF FRESH EGGS FOR CONSUMPTION
INTO THE COOK ISLANDS
FROM NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA, SAMOA & FIJI.**

*Issued as an import health standard pursuant to section 23 – 32
of the Biosecurity Act 2008.
19 December 2019.*

**Ministry of Agriculture
P.O. Box 96
Government of the Cook Islands**

CONTENTS

PART I

1. Review
2. Amendment Record
3. Endorsement
4. Introduction-Objective, Scope, Legislation, Definitions
5. Explanation of Pest Categories

PART II

OFFSHORE SANITARY REQUIREMENTS

1. General
2. Pre-export Phytosanitary Actions
3. Pre-export Lot Inspection
4. Pre-export Lot testing
5. Transit Requirements
6. Specific Country: Commodity requirements
7. 1 Service requirements for Border Clearances
- 7.2 Clearance Requirements for unaccompanied (commercial) consignments.

PART III

EGG HANDLERS AND GENERAL HYGIENE

1. Relative roles
2. Reduction of hazards
3. Egg laying establishments
4. Production of eggs
5. Watering
6. Collection, handling, storage and transport of eggs
7. Equipment
8. Personal cleanliness

PART IV

OPERATION

1. Control measures
2. Control of food hazards
3. Processing of eggs
4. Storage
5. Shelf life for eggs

PART V

INFORMATION AND LABELING

1. Lot identification
2. Product information
3. Labelling

PART 1

1. 1.REVIEW

The Biosecurity Service Standard contained in this document is subject to periodic review. Amendments will be issued to ensure each standard continues to meet current needs.

Edition – 19 December 2019

2. AMENDMENT RECORD

Amendments to this standard will be given a consecutive number and will be dated.

Amendment No	Entered by	Date
1.	N.T.Ngatoko	21 /11/14
2.	N.T.Ngatoko	20/05/19
3.	N.T.Ngatoko	19/12/19

3. ENDORSEMENT

Pursuant to section 23 – 32 of the Biosecurity Act 2008 3, this document is hereby issued as an import health standard for the importation and clearance of fresh eggs.

4. INTRODUCTION

4.1 Objective – The objective of these Import Health Standards is to ensure product safety and quality standards of eggs for human consumption.

4.2 Scope - These standards apply to:

- (a) egg handlers; and
- (b) the primary production, sorting, grading, storing, transporting, packaging, distributing, and supplying of eggs by domesticated chicken intended for human consumption.

2) do not apply to an egg product or traditional delicacy eggs such as 1000-year-old eggs.

4.3 Legislation

The following Acts and Biosecurity standards are referred to, or complement, the implementation of this standard:

- *The Biosecurity Act 2008.*
- *MFE M Act 1995-96*
- *Customs Revenue and Border Protection Act 2012*
- *Ministry of Health Act 2013*
- *Food Act 1992/93*
- *Food Regulations.2013*
- *Fair Trading Act 2008*
- *Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement); Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement); and any other subsequent amendments and modifications to the aforementioned legislation and agreements.*

4.4 Definitions

For the purposes of this Import Health Standard, the following definitions and abbreviations apply:

“**Act**” means the Biosecurity Act 2008; Ministry of Health Act.2013, Customs Revenue and Border Protection Act 2012.

“**Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**” or “**SPS Agreement**” refers to the international treaty of the World Trade Organisation which sets out the basic rules for food safety and animal and plant health standards;

“**Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade**” or “**TBT Agreement**” refers to the international treaty of the World Trade Organisation which exists to ensure that regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. It prohibits technical requirements created in order to limit trade, as opposed to technical requirements created for legitimate purposes such as consumer or environmental protection;

“**breeding flock**” means a group of birds kept for the purpose of production of the laying flock;

“**competent authority**” refers to any one of the authorities responsible for the administration of the laws referred to under section 23 -32 Biosecurity Act 2008 ;

“**container**” means any box, case, basket, carton, sack, bag, or any other device, which is used to facilitate the handling of eggs;

“**cracked egg**” means an egg with a damaged shell, but with intact membrane;

“**domesticated chickens**” refers to members of the Class *Aves* that are managed for the production of eggs intended for human consumption;

“**egg**” means an egg in shell of the domesticated chicken belonging to the species *Gallus domesticus*, and intended for sale for human consumption;

“**egg handler**” means a person who;

- (a) is engaged in the business of producing, grading, packing, processing, supplying, distributing, handling or selling eggs;
- (b) prepares eggs for market; or
- (c) engages in the operation of selling or marketing eggs that he or she has produced, purchased, or acquired from a producer, or which he or she is marketing on behalf of a producer, whether as owner, agent, employee, or otherwise;

“egg laying establishment” means the facilities and the surrounding area where primary production of eggs takes place;

“egg product” means all, or a portion of, the contents found inside eggs separated from the shell, with or without added ingredients, intended for human consumption;

“Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point” or **“HACCP”** refers to the system which identifies, evaluates, and controls hazards significant for food safety;

“inedible egg” means an egg that is not suitable for human consumption and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes a shell egg that:

(a) is contaminated with an odour not associated with a normal egg (be it musty or mouldy);

(b) is stored for hatching for sufficient time to adversely affect the safety and suitability;

(c) has been in an incubator; or

(d) has black rot, blood clot, blood ring, bloody egg, mixed or red rot, sour rot, spot rot or white rot;

“marked” includes plain, legible, conspicuously labeled, stamped, stenciled, printed, or branded marking;

“producer” is a person who ships, transports or sells eggs from his or her own farm, or a person engaged in the business of producing eggs from domesticated fowl for human consumption, who is not in the business of processing eggs into egg products;

“sell by date” or **“shelf life”** means the date by which an egg shall either be sold or if not sold be removed from the shelf;

“sub-container” means a container used within another container.

“Additional declaration” A statement that is required to be entered on a sanitary certificate and which provides specific additional information pertinent to the sanitary condition of a consignment.

Approved “biosecurity holding area/inspection facility”

• A biosecurity holding area/inspection facility approved by the Director of Biosecurity Service, or delegate, in accordance with the **Importation and Clearance of Eggs**.

“Bilateral quarantine arrangement” (BQA)

An inter-agency technical arrangement between the Cook Islands Ministry of Agriculture and the counterpart National Plant Protection Organisation of the exporting country which documents Cook Islands requirements for the control of the importation of Eggs into Cook Islands.

“Director of Biosecurity” A person appointed under section 73 of the Biosecurity Act 2008.

“Consignment” One or more lots imported by one importer, on one conveyance, at one time which is covered by one sanitary certificate.

• **Note 1:** Commercial consignments are unaccompanied consignments covered by an airway bill/bill of lading intended for resale;

• **Note 2:** Private consignments are accompanied consignments imported as personal property which are not intended for resale;

• **Note 3:** Unaccompanied private consignments are consignments covered by an airway bill/bill of lading, or items via the mail pathway, and imported as personal property.

“Entry” (of a pest) Movement of a pest into an area where it is not present, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled.

“Establishment” Perpetuation, for the foreseeable future, of a pest within an area after entry.

“Import Health Standard” A document issued pursuant to section 22-32 of the Biosecurity Act 2008 on behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture permitting entry to the Cook Islands of a specific product under certain conditions.

“Biosecurity Officer” A person appointed as a Biosecurity Officer under section 75 (1) of the Biosecurity Act 2008.

“Introduction” Entry and establishment of a pest.

“IPPC” Abbreviation for the International Plant Protection Convention.

“OIE” means the Organisation Internationale Epizootique-Animal Health Organisation

“Codex” Codex Alimentarius-FAO/WHO-Food Safety

“Lot” The number of units of a single commodity (i.e. species), identifiable by such things as its homogeneity of composition and origin which forms part of a consignment that enters the Cook Islands.

“Biosecurity Service” The section within the Ministry of Agriculture which is responsible for regulatory biosecurity functions.

“Maximum allowable prevalence” (MAP) The level of infestation that is the threshold, above which sanitary actions based on inspection would be applied.

“Non-regulated pest” Non-regulated organisms are those organisms for which sanitary actions would not be undertaken if they were intercepted/detected. These may include new organisms which could not establish in the Cook Islands.

“National Plant Protection Organisation” (NPPO) Official service organisation established by Government to discharge the functions specified under article IV of the IPPC.

“MoA” Ministry of Agriculture

“Pathway” A series of activities that, when carried out according to documented procedures, form a discrete and traceable export system.

“Pest” Any species, strain or biotype of animal or pathogenic agent injurious to animal products.

“Pest list” A list of organisms known to be associated with a specific commodity in a specific country.

“Pest proof container” A container or device of sound durable construction which when closed eliminates the possibility of pests escaping from or entering into its contents.

“Sanitary certificate” (PC) A certificate issued by the authority of an exporting country, in accordance with the requirements of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), Codex Alimentarius Standards and OIE –Animal Health Organization which verifies that the requirements of the relevant import health standard have been met.

“Regulated organisms” Regulated organisms are those organisms for which sanitary actions would be undertaken if they were intercepted/detected.

“Biosecurity Holding Area” Any Biosecurity Holding Area approved in accordance with section 11 of the Biosecurity Act 2008 for the purpose of inspection, storage, treatment, quarantine, holding or destruction of uncleared goods, or part of a port declared to be a transitional facility.

“Unit” An individual piece of produce. Example, in the case of bananas a unit is one hand or grapes a bunch.

5. EXPLANATION OF PEST CATEGORIES

Cook Islands Ministry of Agriculture categorises pests associated with animals and animal products into regulated and non-regulated pests. Measures to prevent the establishment of regulated pests in the Cook Islands are developed in accordance with the appropriate national and other relevant international standards.

Regulated pests are those pests for which actions would be undertaken if they were intercepted/detected. As well as quarantine pests, these include pests that may pose a risk to human or animal health or to the environment, vectors of associated quarantine pests, and virulent strains (not present in Cook Islands) of non-regulated pests and contaminants. Non-regulated pests are those pests for which actions would not be undertaken if they were intercepted/detected.

PART II

OFFSHORE SANITARY REQUIREMENTS -Importation and Clearance of Eggs into the Cook Islands.

1. GENERAL

All fresh eggs for consumption are **prohibited** entry into the Cook Islands unless they are covered by a valid import health standard.

Unless specified, a completed sanitary certificate issued by the exporting country’s national plant protection organisation must accompany all consignments of fresh eggs exported to the Cook Islands.

The sanitary certificate shall contain all information as detailed in International Standard for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), Publication No. 12 (2011) – *Guidelines for Phytosanitary Certificates*.

2. PRE-EXPORT PHYTOSANITARY ACTIONS

Before a sanitary certificate is to be issued, the exporting country's national plant protection organisation must be satisfied that the following general activities, for each consignment, have been undertaken.

3. PRE-EXPORT LOT INSPECTION

A sanitary certificate should not be issued if live regulated pest(s) are detected, unless the consignment is treated in order to eliminate these. If pests are found which are not listed in the specific country commodity import health standard issued for that commodity, the NPPO must establish their regulatory status.

4. PRE-EXPORT LOT TESTING

Testing of consignments prior to export to Cook Islands, for regulated pests which are not visually detectable, is not (generally) required for fresh eggs.

5. TRANSIT REQUIREMENTS

Consignments transiting another country en route to the Cook Islands

The NPPO must ensure that the consignment (prior to export) is held in a manner to ensure that infestation/reinfestation does not occur following sanitary certification. Appropriate procedures must also be in place to ensure that unauthorised product cannot be substituted, or added to, cleared consignments.

Packages must not be opened in transit. Where a consignment is under the direct control of the transiting country NPPO and is either stored, split up or has its packaging changed while in that country (or countries) en route to Cook Islands, a "Re-export Certificate" is required.

Where a consignment is held under bond, as a result of the need to change conveyances, and it is kept in the original container, a "Re-export Certificate" is not required.

6. SPECIFIC COUNTRY: COMMODITY REQUIREMENTS

Specific sanitary requirements and additional declarations to the sanitary certificate for each country: Country commodities have been detailed in the Appendix of this standard and separately in country: commodity specific import health standards.

7. SERVICE REQUIREMENTS FOR BORDER CLEARANCES

7.1 GENERAL

The clearance of fresh eggs shall be carried out in accordance with MoA-Biosecurity Service Operational Manual, - *Requirements for Biosecurity Clearance of Goods Subject to an Import Health Standard*.

7.2 CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR UNACCOMPANIED (COMMERCIAL) CONSIGNMENTS

1. DOCUMENTATION AND CERTIFICATES

All unaccompanied consignments of fresh eggs **must have a valid sanitary certificate with the necessary additional declarations as specified in this standards -Importation and Clearance of Fresh Eggs into the Cook Islands.**

- a) Consignments accompanied by correct documentation will be inspected as specified in sections of this standard.
- b) Consignments without certification, or accompanied by incorrect certification, will be held in a biosecurity holding area/transitional facility until correct documentation is presented. If correct documentation is not presented within 48 hours a non-conformance report must be sent to MoA-Biosecurity Service.
- c) The Importer shall be given a choice of the consignment being reshipped or destroyed at the owners cost.

2. INSPECTION

All inspections of imported fresh eggs to be conducted at an approved transitional facility or Biosecurity Holding Area.

Each individual unit within the sample shall be examined by a Biosecurity Officer, along with the package in which they were contained, for the presence of pests, seeds, signs or symptoms of disease, soil or any other non-conformity with this standard.

3. PACKAGING

Packaging associated with eggs must be clean, free from soil and other contaminants.

4. TESTING

Testing of the consignment for regulated pests which are not visually detectable is not (generally) required for eggs.

PART III
EGG HANDLERS AND GENERAL HYGIENE-Country of Export

1. RELATIVE ROLES –

- 1) All egg handlers who are involved in the egg production supply chain including:
- (a) primary producers;
 - (b) handlers;
 - (c) graders;
 - (d) packagers;
 - (e) processors;
 - (f) suppliers;
 - (g) distributors; and
 - (h) retailers;

shall share the responsibilities in section 1 of the Import Health Standards to ensure food safety is achieved along the production to the consumption chain.

2) All egg handlers are responsible for:

- a) effective communication to ensure an efficient chain of control is maintained from breeding of laying flock to production of eggs ensuring hygiene practices are applied at each stage of the chain and that appropriate and timely action is taken to resolve any food safety problem that may arise;
- b) applying good hygienic, agricultural and animal husbandry practices consistent with food safety, and adapt their operations as appropriate and practicable to meet any specifications for specific hygiene controls to be applied and or any standards to be achieved;
- c) communicating any recommendations for safe handling and storage of eggs and egg products during distribution and transportation, and their subsequent use by food businesses and consumers;
- d) ensuring that eggs under their control are handled and stored properly and according to the producer's instructions;
- e) keeping records on the following matters to enhance the ability to verify the effectiveness of the control systems prescribed in the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Plan or HACCP:
 - (i) prevention and control of avian diseases with an impact on public health;
 - (ii) identification and movement of birds and eggs;
 - (iii) use of agricultural and pest control chemicals;
 - (iv) nature and source of feed, feed ingredients and water;
 - (v) use of veterinary drugs/medicines;
 - (vi) results of testing where testing is performed;
 - (vii) health status of personnel;
 - (viii) cleaning and disinfection; and
 - (ix) traceability or product tracing and result; and
- f) for providing consumers with information on handling, storing, and use, where practical.

2. REDUCTION OF HAZARDS – An egg handler must:

- (a) take all reasonable measures to reduce the likelihood of hazards occurring in or on eggs during primary production;
 - (b) minimize risks of contamination of eggs during primary production; and
 - (c) ensure that sources of potentially harmful substances are minimized and are not present at unacceptable levels in or on eggs.
3. **EGG LAYING ESTABLISHMENTS** – An egg handler must ensure that the egg laying establishment is appropriate for the primary production of eggs by:
- (a) designing, constructing and maintaining the establishment in a manner that minimizes exposure of domesticated chicken or their eggs to hazards and pests; and
 - (b) complying with the Codex Recommended Code of Practice General Principles of Food Hygiene and any other subsequent revision, amendments or additions of the Codex Recommended Code of Practice General Principles of Food Hygiene; and
 - (c) cleaning and maintaining the establishment in a manner that ensures the health of flocks and safety and suitability of eggs.
4. **PRODUCTION OF EGGS** – An egg handler must ensure that eggs come from flocks (both breeding and laying) in good health so that the safety and suitability of the eggs are not adversely affected.
5. **WATERING** – (1) An egg handler must:
- (a) manage water in a way that minimizes the potential for the transmission or the introduction of microbiological or chemical hazards, directly or indirectly, into or on the egg;
 - (b) ensure that water used in primary production operations is suitable for the water's intended purpose and do not contribute to the introduction of microbiological or chemical hazards into or on eggs;
 - (c) ensure that feed for the laying and, or breeding flock do not introduce, directly or indirectly, microbiological or chemical contaminants into eggs;
 - (d) apply properly designed pest control program and measures which should not result in unacceptable levels of residues, such as pesticides, in or on eggs; and
 - (e) procure, transport, store and use agricultural and veterinary chemicals in such a way that they do not pose a risk of contaminating the eggs, flock or the egg-laying establishment.
6. **COLLECTION, HANDLING, STORAGE AND TRANSPORT OF EGGS** – An egg handler must ensure that:
- (a) eggs are collected, handled, stored and transported in a manner that minimizes contamination or damage to the egg or eggshell, with appropriate attention to time temperature and temperature fluctuations; and
 - (b) appropriate measures are implemented during disposal of unsafe and unsuitable eggs to protect other eggs from contamination.
7. **EQUIPMENT** – An egg handler must ensure that:
- (a) egg collection equipment must be made of materials that are non-toxic and be designed, constructed, installed, maintained and used in a manner to facilitate good hygiene practices;

- (b) egg packaging equipment must be designed, constructed, maintained and used in a manner that will minimize damage to the eggshell and avoid the introduction of contaminants in or on eggs; and
- (c) delivery procedures and equipment are handled and carried out in a manner that minimizes damage to the egg or eggshell and avoids the introduction of contaminants in or on eggs.

8. PERSONAL CLEANLINESS – An egg handler must ensure good health and personal cleanliness by:

- (a) following hygiene and health requirements;
 - (b) wearing suitable protective clothing, footwear and head covering; and
 - (c) maintaining proper sanitary facilities;
- to prevent contamination to flock health and ensure safety and suitability of eggs.

PART IV **OPERATION**

1. CONTROL MEASURES –

(1.1) This part refers to control measures that egg handlers must carry out to prevent, eliminate or reduce hazards when producing, sorting, grading, storing, transporting, packaging, distributing, selling and supplying eggs for the market.

(1.2) The control measures must be used in conjunction with good hygienic and animal husbandry practices for the primary production of eggs, to ensure effective control over microbiological and other hazards that can occur in or on eggs.

2. CONTROL OF FOOD HAZARDS – All egg handlers must apply hazards based control measures in relation to eggs, process and product specifications, to ensure that eggs are safe and suitable for human consumption.

3. PROCESSING OF EGGS –

(3.1) All egg handlers must maintain and handle the processing of eggs, at all stages of cleaning, sorting, grading storing and distribution, in a manner that avoids damage, minimises moisture on the shell surface and prevents contamination.

(3.2) Eggs intended for the market should be visibly clean prior to sorting, grading and packing and are expressed in ounces per dozen:

- (a) small – 18oz;
- (b) medium – 21 oz;
- (c) large – 24 oz;
- (d) extra-large – 27oz; or
- (e) jumbo – 30 oz.

(3.3) Visibly cracked, dirty, and inedible eggs should be segregated from clean and intact eggs.

(3.4) Inedible eggs are unfit for human consumption and must be used only for animal foods, agricultural purposes (e.g. composting) or destroyed.

(3.5) Dirty and cracked eggs with appropriate labelling on safe use may be sold directly to consumers only as follows:

(3.6) by an egg producer from his own flock's production, at the site of production or segregation;

- a) at secondary locations operated by the producer-packer for the primary purpose of shell egg retail sales; or
- b) by an egg packer at the grading station where grading or segregation occurred.

4. STORAGE – An egg handler must ensure that:

- (a) eggs are stored at or under 7⁰ C upon arrival in Cook Islands and
- (b) eggs are stored under conditions that do not adversely affect the safety and suitability of eggs.

5. SHELF LIFE FOR EGGS – Eggs will either have a shelf life of 30 days from laying at or under 7⁰ C, or 5 days from laying at ambient temperature.

PART V

INFORMATION AND LABELING

1. LOT IDENTIFICATION – Each container intended for packaging eggs shall be marked in code or in clear English or Cook Islands language, to identify the producing factory, the date of laying, and the flock from which the eggs were produced.

2. PRODUCT INFORMATION – All packaging for eggs should be accompanied by or bear adequate information to enable the next person in the food chain to handle, display, store and prepare the product safely.

3. LABELLING –

(3.1) All packaged eggs should be labelled with clear instructions to enable the next person in the food chain to handle, display, store and use the packaged eggs safely.

(3.2) Each container or sub-container of eggs shall be marked with a name or names and physical address, telephone number, fax and email of the person or company by whom or for whom the eggs were graded and packed.

(3.3) The 'sell by date' which must be one date must be marked on the egg container (Day/Month/Year).

(3.4) Storage conditions must be clearly marked on the container.

(3.5) One of the following sizes must be clearly marked on the container:

- (a) jumbo;

- (b) extra-large;
- (c) large;
- (d) medium; or
- (e) small.

(3.6) An advertisement, sign or placard, which indicates the price of eggs for sale, must also use the full designation of size of eggs.

(3.7) Superlative descriptions or other amplifications of grade or size are not permitted on containers, for example Fancy, Select, Superior, Premium, Giant, and others.

(3.8) The following are prohibited from appearing in labels:

- (a) health claims; or
- (b) descriptive terms that relate to health such as “polyunsaturated”, “higher in iodine” etc. unless it is approved by the Cook Islands. Ministry of Health.

(3.9) The size, grade, name and address markings are not required on containers or sub-containers:

- (a) if sold at retail from a properly marked bulk display and packaged in the presence of the purchaser;
- (b) if packed for shipment or in transit at the airport or wharf;
- (c) if sold to household consumers without advertising by the producer on the premises where produced; or
- (d) if being delivered to competent authority for grading.