



Vessel Policy Statement Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) season including Vessel Seasonal Pest Scheme (VSPS)

Purpose

This policy outlines the seasonal measures for commercial vessels for the Brown Marmorated stink bug (BMSB).

Policy objective

To manage the risk of BMSB and other exotic hitchhiker seasonal pests arriving and establishing in Australia via the vessel's pathway.

- Improve the department's ability to assess seasonal pest risks on vessels prior to arrival.
- Enhance the ability for all parties to manage risks offshore, at berth and onshore.
- Improve the effectiveness and timeliness of BMSB mitigation activities.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all commercial Roll-on Roll-off (Ro-Ro) vessels that have berthed, loaded or transhipped goods from target risk countries between 1 September and 30 April inclusive.

Target risk countries

The following 38 countries are target risk countries within the scope of vessel measures:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkiye, Ukraine, United States and Uzbekistan.

Policy statement

The risk of BMSB on board commercial vessels will be managed through the following measures:

1. Mandated seasonal pest (SP) inspections of all roll-on roll-off vessels from target risk countries

Ro-Ro vessels that have berthed, loaded or transhipped goods from target risk countries will be subject to a mandatory SP inspection on arrival in Australian territory.

SP inspection principles

- Except to allow access for Australian government official/s, a vessel's ramp and doors are to remain closed and goods must not be discharged until the SP inspection is complete and approval has been granted by a biosecurity officer.
- Where live insects or significant numbers of freshly dead insects are detected, in addition to the SP inspection, a direction to undertake a dual action treatment (thermal pyrethrum fog + residual insecticide) may be given.

SP inspection exemptions

Under the following circumstances there may be an exemption from mandatory SP inspection.

- Ro-Ro vessels that have only loaded cargo that has been treated by a BMSB approved method, is covered by a safeguarding agreement, or is compliant with [New, Unused and Not Field Tested \(NUFT\) BMSB requirements](#) and have detected no insects on board during their voyage.
- Ro-Ro vessels that participate in the Vessel Seasonal Pest Scheme (VSPS) and have detected no insects on board during their voyage. (See point 3 for more information)

The department will continue to perform inspections on vessels for other biosecurity reasons unrelated to BMSB. The nature of these inspections will vary based on the vessel's history of biosecurity compliance and pre-arrival reporting.

2. Vessel surveillance (Seasonal Pest Questionnaire and Crew Vessel Inspections)

Vessels intending to enter Australian territory must provide a Pre-Arrival Report (PAR) using the Maritime and Aircraft Reporting System (MARS) between 96 and 12 hours before the vessel's estimated time of arrival.

Between 1 September and 15 June, all Ro-Ro vessels are sent a Seasonal Pest Questionnaire (SPQ) when their PAR is lodged.

Vessels must complete the questionnaire and perform a crew vessel inspection prior to approval to berth being granted. Where live or dead insects are detected:

- The crew must perform two additional inspections over 48 hours.
- Vessel masters must provide the number of live and dead insects found, the deck and hold locations and clear high-quality photos of all insects found.

- All insects must be kept refrigerated (NOT stored in the freezer) for presentation to a Biosecurity Officer on arrival in Australia.
- Crew vessel inspections must be submitted on the department approved form (MPI-DAFF crew inspection report), provided to the shipping line upon successful application.

Other vessel types must report detections of any insects through their PAR as per mandatory biosecurity vessel reporting obligations. Where BMSB or other actionable exotic species are reported, the vessel will be directed to perform a crew vessel inspection.

3. Vessel Seasonal Pest Scheme (VSPS)

Shipping lines responsible for Ro-Ro vessels arriving in Australia during BMSB season can apply for the VSPS. The VSPS offers shipping lines a reduction in seasonal pest inspections where vessels can demonstrate that biosecurity risk measures are acceptably managed.

VSPS Qualification Requirements – Pre-Season

To qualify for the VSPS, a vessel operator (shipping line) must submit an application with a Biosecurity Risk Plan to the department for assessment and agreement. The plan must include:

- 1) Vessel names and IMOs to be included and their key responsible parties.
- 2) Mandatory cleaning prior to loading and commencement of each separate voyage to Australia.
- 3) Mandatory cleaning before and after the movement/adjustment/discharge of any cargo while in transit to Australia
- 4) Mandatory crew vessel inspections throughout each individual voyage to Australia.
 - a) All participating vessels must undertake crew vessel inspections and record details on the required template. Inspections must be conducted:
 - i) 48 hours after vessel departs each international region (i.e., Europe, Africa, Asia) en-route to Australia.
 - ii) seven (7) days prior to submitting the PAR in MARS.
 - b) If further inspections or detections are made in addition to the above, the details of any insects found must also be provided on the required template.
 - c) Provide clear high-quality photos of all insects found.
 - d) All insects must be refrigerated (NOT stored in the freezer) and presented to a Biosecurity Officer on arrival in Australia.
 - e) The Crew Vessel Inspection reports and photos must be returned with the SPQ to the National Maritime Centre ([NMC](#)). It is recommended to do this early to avoid delays.

Note: Vessels that visit New Zealand (NZ) prior to arriving to Australia must also submit the 'Crew Vessel Inspection' report that was provided to the NZ Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to the NMC.

- 5) Other measures that will be undertaken prior to and during the voyage to reduce the likelihood of vessel insect contamination while berthed at overseas ports, on-board cross-contamination to other cargo and to detect any infestations.
- 6) Measures to be undertaken at anchorage to disrupt and treat any known infestations.
- 7) Measures to be undertaken at berth to detect, monitor and contain any infestations.
- 8) Measures to be undertaken, if required, onshore to manage any contaminated cargo at each anticipated port of arrival.
- 9) Measures to be undertaken to improve the biosecurity risk awareness of crew members, and their compliance with the agreed plan.
- 10) The evidence that can and will be provided to the department on request.

Response

When a VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan is submitted, the department will:

- 1) Assess the merits of proposed activities and agree any conditions that would be applied to their use.
- 2) Agree whether the vessel operator qualifies for participation in the VSPS.
- 3) Provide a written response to the vessel operator on the outcome of their proposal.

VSPS Eligibility requirements for each voyage to Australia – Pre-arrival of each Vessel

Vessels that qualify for the VSPS must, for each separate voyage to Australia:

- 1) Complete and submit a Pre-Arrival Report (PAR).
- 2) Complete and submit an SPQ, Crew Vessel Inspection reports and images of any insects found.
- 3) Have access to and met the obligations of the approved on-board VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan agreed by the department and the vessel's operator.

On submission of the SPQ and Crew Vessel Inspection reports from each vessel, the department will:

- 1) Assess the BMSB risk and aim to notify the vessel at least 24 hours prior to its scheduled arrival of berthing conditions and either:
 - a) Permit the vessel to commence immediate operations including the discharge of cargo
 - b) Permit the vessel to commence immediate operations including the discharge of cargo *and* direct the vessel to undergo inspection or other activities
 - c) Direct the vessel to remain closed and prohibit goods from being discharged subject to inspection or other activities being completed, or
 - d) Direct the vessel to remain at anchorage subject to further crew inspection or other activities being completed.

- 2) Consider the use of a controlled discharge and onshore management of compliant cargo in accordance with the agreed VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan where on-board detections of BMSB or other actionable exotic species are confirmed.

Assurance and Sanctions

The department will monitor compliance with VSPS requirements through implementing a random inspection regime on eligible vessels to verify the continued compliance of vessel operators in undertaking agreed risk mitigation activities, reporting detections, and reporting the risk status of goods.

The following sanctions may be applied under the VSPS:

- 1) A vessel that provides poor-quality crew vessel inspection reports or evidence (photos) of insects detected on board will be given a warning.
- 2) Continued submission of incomplete or poor-quality crew vessel inspection reports or evidence will result in that vessel being ineligible from participating in the VSPS.
- 3) A vessel that does not comply with the activities agreed in the VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan will be given a warning and will receive an SP inspection and may require a dual action treatment (thermal pyrethrum fog + residual insecticide).
- 4) A vessel operator that accrues more than 3 warnings against vessels within its eligible fleet for not complying with the activities agreed in its VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan, will be disqualified from participating in the VSPS.
- 5) A vessel operator that does not or cannot provide supporting evidence when requested to do so will be disqualified from participating in the VSPS.

Where the department is not confident the biosecurity risk associated with a vessel or its cargo can be adequately managed, they may direct the vessel to leave Australian territory and for the cargo to be exported.

Where cargo has been permitted to be discharged and then the department decides the risk is no longer acceptable, the cargo may be directed for export and the vessel directed to leave Australian territory.

If you have any VSPS questions or issues you wish to raise, email safeguarding@aff.gov.au.

Department management

The department will:

- Assess reported SP questionnaire responses, managed by the National Maritime Centre (NMC).
- Assess the BMSB risk of the vessel and aim to notify the vessel at least 24 hours prior to its scheduled arrival of berthing conditions.

- Notifications are sent via the BSD (Biosecurity Status Document) but may include verbal advice from the NMC or other department officers where there are any issues.
- Consider the use of a controlled discharge and onshore management of compliant cargo in accordance with the agreed VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan where detections are confirmed.
- Implement an assurance regime to verify the continued compliance of vessel operators in reporting detections and risk status of goods.
- Apply sanctions to individual vessel and vessel operators where non-compliance is detected.

Document information

The following table contains administrative metadata.

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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