



Vessel Policy Statement - Vessel Seasonal Pest Scheme (VSPS) 2020-2021 season

Purpose

This policy outlines the Vessel Seasonal Pest Scheme (VSPS) measures for commercial Roll on Roll Off (RoRo) vessels during the Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) 2020-21 season.

In response to the rapid expansion of BMSB throughout Europe and North America, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department) is strengthening the seasonal measures to manage the risk of BMSB arriving in Australia for the 2020–21 BMSB risk season.

VSPS offers a specific response for RoRo vessels that can demonstrate continued compliance with eligibility criteria. VSPS continues as a trial scheme for the 2020-21 season.

Policy objective

In response to detections and challenges in managing on board infestations during the 2018-19 BMSB season and lessons learned during the 2019-20 risk season, the 2020-21 BMSB season aims to:

- Continue improvements to the department's ability to assess seasonal pest risks on vessels prior to arrival
- Reward shipping lines that take greater responsibility for preventing and mitigating on board risks
- 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 RoRo vessels that have berthed, loaded or transhipped goods from target risk countries from 1 September 2020 and that arrive in Australian territory by 31 May 2021 (inclusive).

Policy statement

The VSPS comprises pre-border, border and post-border elements to improve the department's ability to assess and respond to the risk of BMSB on board RoRo vessels.

Only RoRo vessels that are eligible for the VSPS on each separate voyage to Australia and have detected no live insects on board may be exempted from mandatory Seasonal Pest (SP) inspection.

VSPS Qualification Requirements – Pre Season

Shipping lines responsible for RORO 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 demonstrate biosecurity risk measures are acceptably managed.

To qualify for the VSPS a vessel operator (shipping line) must submit to the department (email: seaports@awe.gov.au) for assessment an on board VSPS Biosecurity Risk Plan that:

1. Identifies vessels to be included and their key responsible parties
2. Requires:
 - a. All participating vessels to undertake cleaning prior to loading and commencement of each separate voyage to Australia.



- b. Measures undertaken prior to loading or on board to minimise contamination/infestation.
 - c. Measures to be undertaken at anchorage to disrupt and treat any known infestations.
 - d. Measures to be undertaken at berth to detect, monitor and contain any infestations.
 - e. Measures to be undertaken, if required, onshore to manage any contaminated cargo at each anticipated port of arrival.
3. Outlines other measures that will be undertaken to reduce the likelihood of on board cross-contamination and to detect any infestations, for example on route trapping, activities undertaken prior to loading to minimise contamination (e.g. treatment of all cargo by a BMSB approved method), segregation of cargo and/or decks, treatment of vessel by an approved BMSB method after loading, and/or on route fogging with a residual fumigant.
 4. Outlines other measures that will be undertaken to improve the biosecurity risk awareness of crew members; and their compliance with the agreed plan.
 5. Outlines the evidence that can and will be provided to the department on request.
 6. All participating vessels to undertake self-inspection reporting that includes one of two reporting options:

Option 1

- i. Self-inspection report 48 hours after the vessel has departed every international region/continent en-route to Australia e.g. Leaving the USA, leaving Asia.

then

- ii. Daily self-inspection reports commencing seven (7) days prior to first port of arrival in Australia.

including

- iii. Submission of daily self-inspection reports 96 hours (e.g. 4 days) submitted to the Maritime National Coordination Centre ([MNCC](#)) before arrival in Australia.

Option 2

- iv. Daily self inspection report for each day of the full voyage, each day after the vessel has departed the last international port en-route to Australia.
- v. Submission of the entire report (every daily inspection report) to the Maritime National Coordination Centre ([MNCC](#)) 96-12 hours before arrival in Australia.

Note: If a vessel visited New Zealand (NZ) prior to arriving to Australia, the vessel must also submit the 7 day self inspection report that was provided to the NZ Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to the MNCC.



VSPTS Eligibility requirements – Pre-arrival of each Vessel

To be eligible for the VSPTS, each vessel, for each separate voyage to Australia, must:

1. Provide, at the time of submitting their pre-arrival report, information relating to the risk status of loaded cargo.
 - a. confirming whether cargo has been treated, is covered by a safeguarding agreement, or is compliant with New, Unused and Not Field Tested (NUFT) BMSB requirements; and
 - b. Have met the obligations of any on board VSPTS Biosecurity Risk Plan agreed by the department and the vessel's operator; and
 - c. Have access to the VSPTS Biosecurity Risk Plan agreed by the department and the vessel's operator for the management of the cargo and vessel in the event that an infestation is detected.

Response

Upon receipt of a vessel operator's proposal (the VSPTS Biosecurity Risk Plan) the department will convene a review group comprising representatives from Biosecurity Operations and Compliance Divisions, Inspection Group, Science Services Group and Plant Division. Members 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 VSPTS.
3. Provide a written response to the vessel operator on the outcome of their proposal.

On submission of a pre-arrival report from each vessel, the department will:

1. Assess the status of cargo and BMSB risk and where possible 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 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 Contingency Plan where on board detections of BMSB or other actionable exotic species are confirmed.

Assurance and Sanctions

At all stages of implementation the department will continue to monitor compliance with the VSPTS and may verify the performance of agreed activities through assessment of documentary evidence, or as part of existing routine inspection activities.



The purpose of assurance measures is to assess whether the activities performed under the VSPS can provide the department with confidence that the biosecurity risk posed by the vessel is acceptable.

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 reports or evidence (photos) of insects detected on board will be given a warning.
2. Continued submission of poor quality 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 (e.g. self-inspection, pre-loading cleaning) will be given a warning and will receive an SP inspection.
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, may 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.

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

Where cargo is permitted to be discharged, if at any time, the department is of the view that 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 the seaports policy team at seaports@awe.gov.au.

Document information

The following table contains administrative metadata.

Policy owner:	Director, Conveyances and Ports, Border Controls Branch, Biosecurity Operations Division
Version number:	2.0
Version date:	15 December 2020