**Hitchhiker Pest Awareness Webinar: Q&A**

**Questions from both sessions (4 & 5 September 2024)**

1. **Are cobwebs a concern**

Cobwebs are a concern if found in imported shipping containers or imported goods as it could indicate that exotic spiders or other pests are present. In our operational experience, we often find insects along with spiders, as spiders use the insects as a food source.

An example of a hitchhiking spider species is the Joro spider (*Trichonephila clavate*). It is native to East Asia but is now spreading across the United States.

Accordingly, we advise you to closely examine goods/containers with cobwebs for any signs of spiders or other pests and, if found, report to the See. Secure. Report hotline on 1800 798 636.

For more information on what to look for when spotting hitchhiker pests, please visit: [Look for hitchhiker pests - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/hitchhiker-pests#how_help).

1. **Since hitchhiker pests and arrival of cargo such as offshore modules will be remaining offshore, will these commodities be subject to inspections?**

Offshore installations operating outside of Australian territory are not subject to biosecurity control. However, any conveyance (such as support vessels and aircraft) that leaves Australian territory and interacts with an offshore module/installation (physical contact or in close proximity) becomes an exposed conveyance and is subject to biosecurity requirements when returning to Australia. For example, vessels that move between the offshore installation and an Australian port as part of provisioning operations.

When returning to Australian territory, exposed conveyances become subject to biosecurity control and must undertake pre-arrival reporting and notify the department if it intends to unload goods. Further information on biosecurity management requirements for vessels, equipment and infrastructure entering Australian waters (including vessels servicing these activities) can be found in the [Offshore Installations Biosecurity Guide](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/avm/vessels/offshore_installations/offshore-installations).

1. **Will the hitchhiker pest webinar slides be shared and has webinar been recorded for future use?**

Yes, the webinar slides and recordings are available at: [agriculture.gov.au/hitchhiker-pests](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/hitchhiker-pests)​

1. **Will there be any changes to treatment for khapra beetle in the short future?**

In 2020-2021, Australia saw a marked increase in khapra beetle (*Trogoderma granarium*) interceptions. They were found in goods they had previously not been found with, and in shipments from countries not known to have khapra beetle.

In response to the spike in these detections, we introduced a range of urgent actions to prevent the arrival of the pest into Australia. Since then, we have seen a sustained reduction in the number of khapra beetle detections.

We will continue to monitor the sea container pathway for detections of khapra beetle. We will reassess the need for any further actions as required.

For more information, including details of the existing measures, please visit: [Urgent actions to protect against khapra beetle - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/urgent-actions#daff-page-main)

1. **Do you get weeds seeds in containers?**

The container pathway is a potential pathway for the introduction of exotic weeds, as well as break bulk cargo. As shown in photos in the webinar slides, we see grain contamination both internally and externally on containers.

Importers must address Australian biosecurity concerns by complying with biosecurity conditions applicable at the time of entry. To reduce the risk of grain contamination, the container must be free of any biosecurity risk material.

For more information on biosecurity requirements for containers, please visit: [Cargo containers: biosecurity aspects and procedures - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/aspects-procedures#_11-timber-used-in-the-construction-of-containers)

1. **Who has to carry the cost when pests are found in container at the destination (e.g. cost of fumigation premises, delayed container return etc.)**

The cost arrangements will depend on the particular circumstances, including where the pest has been found and whether it’s crossed our national border. We have cost sharing deeds in place to manage post border detections of exotic pests or diseases. For further information on how we coordinate such responses (including cost sharing arrangements), visit: [How we coordinate a response to an outbreak | Outbreak](https://www.outbreak.gov.au/our-role/response-outbreak)

However, for most cases, we find the pest when it's still associated with the goods in the container at the border. In such cases, the cost generally falls to the owner of the goods or the person in charge of the consignment at the time of the detection.

1. **What would you do if you find live animals?**

If you find anything that poses a biosecurity risk, including live animals, please call the See. Secure. Report hotline on 1800 798 636.

We only recommend securing live animals if it can be done safely. For example, if it was in a shipping container, you could simply shut the doors of the container. If it was in warehouse, you may try to coerce it into a corner of the building and then cover it with a blanket of box until a biosecurity officer arrives. Do not approach or try to secure dangerous or poisonous animals, such as snakes.

1. **How do I report suspicious insects when on the street or road if there's no way to secure it at that moment?**

Pests and diseases can spread quickly over large distances. It’s essential that you report what you find as soon as possible.

If it can be done safely, we recommend that you capture the pest using whatever items you may have available to contain it (such as lunch box or a bucket). It is important to be aware that some pests may be able to chew through plastic, so using a plastic container should only be used as a short-term solution before a biosecurity officer arrives.

If you aren’t able to secure or contain the pest, we encourage you to take a photo and report it to the See.Secure.Report hotline on 1800 798 636. Our officers will assess the situation, and a biosecurity officer may survey the area. For more information, please visit: [Report a pest or disease concern - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/report)

1. **Please provide us some examples of the most unsuspecting locations where hitchhiker pests can be found in a shipment/container/package**.

There are several examples and photos included in the webinar slides provided at [agriculture.gov.au/hitchhiker-pests](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/hitchhiker-pests)​

Another example is a detection of khapra beetle within a cardboard box itself. On initial inspection, the cardboard box looked normal. However, upon closer inspection, we found damage in between the cardboard layers. Previously cardboard boxes were considered low risk; however we’re now starting to identify them as a potential food source for khapra beetle.

In addition, the floors of shipping containers themselves are a risk as khapra beetle can hide and survive in the cracks and crevices them without food for several years.

1. **Is this fighting a losing battle? If you've found exposure like the examples in 2020, there might have been others that haven't been detected?**

While it may sometimes feel like an unmanageable problem, our department and our international counterparts are investing in many initiatives to comprehensively manage the risk of hitchhiker pests. This includes development of new technologies, such as those that assist in detecting or treating pests more easily. These defences help strengthen our biosecurity system and keep Australia free of some the world’s most harmful pests. You can learn about these actions at: [Hitchhiker pest program - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/hitchhiker-pests)

In addition, we’re also spreading awareness through a range of actions and would like to emphasise the importance of community reporting. Due to the significant volume of containers arriving at our border, we’re unable to screen and inspect everything. Our biosecurity system is a shared responsibility across our department, community and industry.

We also conduct surveillance to monitor the status of pests in Australia. You can learn more about our National Border Surveillance program at: [Pest and disease surveillance at Australia’s borders - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/australia/border-surveillance)

1. **Container traceability is great in theory and would solve a lot of issues. Unfortunately shipping lines are very reluctant to divulge - will the department help and assist to in pushing shipping lines to comply so more informative choice of empty containers at origin?**

Obtaining sea container data is something that we have been exploring. It would be ideal for our department to be able to understand the history of containers so that we can identify their risk. However, access to that historical data is an issue. We are exploring options to resolve this access issue through our work in international forums.

1. **What are the hitchhiker pest risks between ocean-going vessels and transfer vessels?**

For hitchhiker pests that are *inside* containers, the pests will move with those containers as the containers move until they arrive at their destination. For hitchhiker pests that our *outside* containers (surface contaminants such as snails), they may be able to be inspected and removed while being transferred (before arriving in Australia).

For the risks of hitchhikers on the vessels themselves, it may be possible that when cargo is moved to a transfer vessel, some types of hitchhikers (e.g. termites, storage pests, spiders and overwintering insects) might move from the cargo into the transfer vessel, and then either cause problems on the vessel (especially termites and storage pests), or move and contaminate other cargo on the vessel.

1. **What steps does the department take or require shipping lines to take to mitigate or compensate when the contaminants were identified as present in the container in past chains?**

We are working with our international counterparts on the following concept: each party in the supply chain that receives a container has a responsibility for inspecting the container for contaminants, and playing their part in maintaining the hygiene of the container.

Compensation for previous voyages of containers is not something we have considered exploring. We are only able to regulate voyages that come into Australia through our import conditions. We require global solutions to ensure that all voyages internationally are conducted using clean containers prior to packing.

1. **What do you do about mould inside a container?**

Acting on mould in a container depends on the percentage of goods that are covered. We would consider mould to be a serious biosecurity concern if:

* more than 30% of the surface area is affected by mould, or
* the container has multiple colours or strains of mould.

In these situations, the pest species may be feeding off the mould. Mould therefore indicates there may be a biosecurity risk present and should be reported to our department.

1. **How close are we to industry inspection?**

We currently allow Biosecurity Industry Participants at metropolitan Class 14.4 Approved Arrangements to perform Rural Tailgate Inspections (RTG) of sea containers that will be unpacked in rural areas. Learn more about RTG inspections here: [Arrival of goods in Australia - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/arrival#departmental-rural-tailgate-inspection)

The [Hitchhiker Pest Program](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/hitchhiker-pests#onshore-approved-arrangements-aa) aims to expand approved arrangements to enable industry to conduct more sea container inspections. The goal of this arrangement is for industry to take up inspections of medium and lower risk pathways.

Timeframes for implementing these arrangements are dependent on the development of new IT systems that will facilitate these inspections. The department will release more information on implementation timeframes within the next 12 months.

In the meantime, the department is seeking feedback on these proposed new arrangements from businesses and individuals involved in the import pathway for shipping containers. To have your say, please visit: [Take survey - Approved arrangements for container inspection and cleaning - Agriculture hub](https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/container-inspection/take-survey)

1. **Are there any rules on fumigating containers between shipments to prevent transportation of live insects in the first place?**

We have mandatory treatment conditions for certain sea containers to address the risk of khapra beetle. This includes Full Container Load/Full Container Consolidated (FCL/FCX) containers:

* packed with [high-risk plant products](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/plant-products#list-of-highrisk-plant-products)  in a [khapra beetle target risk country](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#collapsible_inner_link_listriskcountry) must be treated offshore using an [approved treatment option](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#approved-options).
* packed in a [khapra beetle target risk country](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#collapsible_inner_link_listriskcountry)and will be unpacked in a rural khapra risk postcode of Australia (grain or nut growing areas, see [postcode list](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/khapra-postcodes.pdf)) must be treated offshore using an [approved treatment option](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#approved-options).

For more information on khapra measures, please visit: [Measures for sea containers under the khapra beetle urgent actions - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures)

There are no treatment requirements under Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) seasonal measures for sea containers themselves. For more information on BMSB seasonal measures, visit: [Seasonal measures for Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/brown-marmorated-stink-bugs#bmsb-measures-for-goods)

1. **Does the department use present and or emerging technologies to detect hitchhiker pests?**

We have partnered with the University of Canberra to trial new detection methods for hitchhiker pests. This trial involves novel molecular detection techniques targeting environmental DNA, which could greatly enhance detection of cryptic species and complement Australian biosecurity responses. For more on this project information, see: [Hitchhiker pest program - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/hitchhiker-pests#environmental-dna-edna)

The department has also done a range of other trials, including using several camera technologies. For example, in collaboration with Trellis Data, we trialled installing cameras on key cranes in the Port of Brisbane to try and detect contaminants and tests as containers were being unloaded. The technology was unable to detect biosecurity risk material to a sufficient level of accuracy that is required for it to be implemented into an operational environment. However, the project provided valuable insights into the challenges of implementing automated camera technologies in operational settings and the lessons learned will prove valuable for any future trials.

Another camera technology we have trialled is a handheld Hyperspectral Camera System. In collaboration with Intelligent System Designs (ISD), this project trialled a portable AI-enhanced hyperspectral and visual camera system to detect and categorise potential biosecurity threats. The aim was to develop a handheld device for advanced surveillance and inspection use in hard-to-reach and difficult-to-inspect areas and for time-consuming processes. While the high-detection rate from this trial is encouraging, further development and improvements to the system are required before it can be used as an effective tool for detecting pest risks in a range of inspection and surveillance settings. Learn more at:

1. **Will we see fumigation of sea freight extended to be all year round?**

Seasonal measures, such as those for Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB), will remain seasonal as they are based on the seasonal nature of the pest being an overwintering pest. We have identified the clear pattern that the pest follows, such as where it is found in goods, and what season it is found in. Therefore, the department does not need to introduce year-long measures.

For more information on BMSB measures, please visit: [Seasonal measures for Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/brown-marmorated-stink-bugs)

1. **Would the use of pest detector dogs be considered?**

Detector dogs make an invaluable contribution to Australia’s biosecurity system, helping to protect Australia from exotic pests and diseases. Detector dogs are used in conjunction with several other biosecurity strategies and detection tools to help protect Australia’s agricultural industries, environment, economy and human health.

The department has used detector dogs for post biosecurity responses and post border responses to assist in the detection of Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB). In these cases, the dogs have been able to identify where the pests were, helping to speed up and having a more successful response.

We are currently exploring the use of Detector Dogs in sea and air cargo inspections. In the sea cargo space, dogs have been successfully trialled for inspecting break bulk machinery and vehicles for BMSB. We are now developing a policy to allow for their permanent use in this role, with implementation expected in 2025.

We also trialled using Detector Dogs to detect BMSB on car carrier vessels. However, the deck floors on these vessels have thousands of tie-down holes for securing the cars. These holes posed a safety risk as the dogs’ feet could easily slip into them. As a result, the trial was aborted. For more information, please visit: [Detector Dogs - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/australia/detector-dogs)

1. **Thinking about those case studies - both issues originated from Sudan - How far away are we from insisting that containers that have been used in previous journeys to hotspot countries, from needing to be fumigated prior to loading of goods destined for Australia, and presumably the shipping lines will be responsible for managing this and ensuring compliance?**

Addressing this issue was our original goal for our khapra beetle measures: to be able to mandate that containers are treated based on what they have historically transported. For example, if we knew a container had previously carried high risk plant products from a khapra beetle country, that would be a container we would want fumigated before it was loaded with goods.

However, as detailed above, obtaining the data to enable this has been challenging. While shipping lines do collect and store that information, there’s no single repository of the data at this point.

Accordingly, our original goal is currently on hold. However, there are discussions happening internationally about whether the provision of container history, cargo and movement data is something that we could ultimately work towards in the future.

1. **How far away is the release on you RNA / DNA container testing devices? Is there any intention to mandate the use of these for BMSB?**

The University of Canberra has a project underway looking at container sampling devices (automated sampling devices).

It is proof-of-concept trial to see if these devices could be placed in containers to detect target hitchhiker pest RNA or DNA during a voyage. The project is still underway. Until we have the results, we are unable to provide further information on implementation timeframes.

So, at this point in time, there is no intention to mandate these devices as an alternative measure for hitchhiker pests, including BMSB.

1. **What are the country action list countries?**

The Country Action List (CAL) refers to high risk countries or ports that have documented high levels of contamination or high-risk pests (such as Giant African Snail) and are considered as high-risk pathways.

Sea containers and break-bulk cargo originating/arriving from or transhipping through these countries and ports is referred to as CAL cargo. Due to the increased risk, all cargo originating/arriving from, or transhipping through a CAL port, is subject to heightened biosecurity measures on arrival including mandatory inspection. For more information, including a list of these countries, please visit: [Country Action List (CAL) - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/arrival/pests/cal)

We also utilise the Sea Container Hygiene System (SCHS) to manage the biosecurity risk associated with sea containers arriving in CAL countries at the port of loading. Participants in the SCHS can benefit from reduced intervention on arrival in Australia. Learn more about the SCHS at: [Sea Container Hygiene System (SCHS) - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-providers/sea-container-hygiene-system)

1. **What are the proposed changes to shipping container design to reduce the risk of hitchhiker pests?**

We have commissioned a project with Murdoch University’s Harry Butler Institute to research a solution to combat the risk of hitchhiker pests in shipping containers. This project investigates internal and external structural design improvements that could reduce spaces in sea containers that can harbour hitchhiker pests and where contaminants could collect.

This includes trialling alternative floor designs to reduce cracks and crevices, in turn reducing the accumulation of grain residue and stored product pests such as Khapra Beetle. It also includes changes to the under-floor design features of containers, such as the cross members. Cross members on the undersides of containers are a common contamination point, particularly when containers are set down on unsealed surfaces. Accordingly, the project is investigating alternatives to provide a more sealed underside.

Murdoch University’s research is one of the innovative solutions being considered by the International Plant Protection Convention’s [Sea Container Focus Group](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/media-release-seek-solutions-reduce-biodiversity-risks.pdf). These solutions aim to minimise pest risks associated with sea container movements.

The project team have been engaging with international container manufacturers to potentially implement these design improvements in the future. For more information on this project, please visit: [Hitchhiker pest program - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/hitchhiker-pests#sea-container-design-improvements)

1. **Will the hitchhiker pest program increase the number of non-conformances given out?**

We are expanding monitoring of the sea container pathway under the Hitchhiker Pest Program. We are aiming to partner with industry to inspect more containers than previous years. Data captured from this enhanced monitoring will potentially be used to reclassify ports and countries based on the risk identified.

We are also aiming to establish new conditions under the Biosecurity (Conditionally Non-Prohibited Goods) Determination 2021. The proposed amendments to this legislation would allow us to take compliance action where it is justified, and would provide regulatory certainty about sea container cleanliness conditions. In turn, the changes are expected to reduce the risk of hitchhiker pests and creating a stronger compliance framework for sea container cleanliness.

For more information on the hitchhiker pest program, please visit: [Hitchhiker pest program - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/hitchhiker-pests)

1. **Would you implement new methods to decontaminate brand new vehicles arriving in Australia?**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we observed a significant increase in seed contamination and hitchhiker pests on vehicles than previous years. The increase in detections was partly due to supply chain delays caused by the pandemic, which resulted in cars being stored for longer periods after their manufacturer (thus increasing their susceptibility to contamination) before being shipped to their destination country. To combat this issue, the Department has been working closely with industry and supply chains to implement decontamination practices to reduce contamination and ensure that vehicles arrived in Australia clean.

The current practices for decontaminating vehicles of seed contamination are ‘low-tech’, with only cleaning and in some cases plucking seeds individually available. Looking forward, we are continuing to investigate new potential treatments for new vehicles and machinery to address the risk of pests. However, there are no immediate changes expected.

1. **Has there been an increase in intercepts over the recent years or has it stabilised?**

Several countries, including Australia, have seen an increase in the global movement of sea containers infested with hitchhiker pests. This increase can be attributed to climate change, intensification of agriculture, accelerated movement of people and products, changes in trade patterns.

Through recent surveys, we have identified high levels of contamination and hitchhiker pests arriving on or within sea containers. For example, inspections of containers from 2019-2022 found that 20% of containers from CAL countries were contaminated with biosecurity risk material, and 2% were contaminated with live hitchhiker pests. Over the same period, 6% of containers subject to rural tailgate inspections were contaminated with biosecurity risk material.

The spread of some pests has stabilised, though not decreased overall. There are also new pests being detected in countries that were previously free of them. For example, Hornets that are native to Asia have been detected in the United States recently.

1. **What is the process for offshore fumigation accreditation in The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry?**

To ensure pre-border biosecurity treatments effectively manage biosecurity risk before it reaches our shores, we have established a number of pre-border [biosecurity treatment assurance schemes](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/AusTreat).

***Austreat***

We recently introduced [AusTreat](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/AusTreat), a new pre-border biosecurity treatment provider scheme. AusTreat has replaced the Offshore BMSB Treatment Providers Scheme and sets the conditions for the regulation of pre-border biosecurity treatment providers. AusTreat is not pest or pathway specific, meaning it could grow to incorporate other existing government-to-industry schemes or entirely new measures against future biosecurity risks.

Applications to register to be an approved treatment provider under AusTreat are now open; registrations are valid for three years. Treatment providers approved under AusTreat will be included on the [List of treatment providers](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/pre-border-biosecurity-treatment-providers#list-providers) on our website. To apply, visit: [AusTreat pre-border biosecurity treatment provider scheme - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/AusTreat)

Please note: AusTreat will **not** replace the Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS) as we administer AFAS with other government agencies under bilateral government-to-government arrangements, as detailed below.

***AFAS***

The Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS) is a bilateral arrangement between the department and participating overseas government agencies. AFAS manages the high biosecurity risk posed by ineffective methyl bromide (MB) treatments performed offshore and is currently operational in 12 countries. Applications to register under AFAS are reviewed by our partner agency in each country. Treatment providers approved under AFAS are included on the [List of treatment providers](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/pre-border-biosecurity-treatment-providers#list-providers) on our website. To find a contact at the relevant partner agency or to learn more visit: [Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/afas#participating-australian-fumigation-accreditation-scheme-countries--government-contact-details)

1. **As imported containers seem to present the greatest risk, why doesn't the department licence importers, perhaps after they've done specific training similar to approved arrangements but possibly not as prescriptive?**

We’ve explored the possibility of introducing ‘light-touch’ arrangements for regulating the import industry, particularly for businesses managing imported shipping containers. However, current legislative constraints limit our ability to move forward with this. It’s a noteworthy idea and something we may explore further in the future, potentially through legislative changes.

While there is no requirement for importers (companies or individuals) to hold an import licence to import goods into Australia, importers may need to obtain import permits to clear certain imported goods from customs and biosecurity control.

1. **Are there links to YouTube showing the media releases for the Hitchhiker pests?**

We have not released any items on YouTube as part of our awareness campaign. To see the awareness videos and social media posts that will be released over the coming months, please follow us on:

* [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-department-of-agriculture-fisheries-and-forestry)
* Instagram via our [Australian Biosecurity](https://www.instagram.com/australianbiosecurity/) account @australianbiosecurity and our [department](https://www.instagram.com/daffgov/?hl=en) account @dafgov
* Facebook via our [Australian Biosecurity account](https://www.facebook.com/australianbiosec/) and our [department account](https://www.facebook.com/daffgov/).
1. **Would it be viable to have automatic insecticide dispensers or diffuses within containers?**

We generally don’t consider automatic insecticide dispensers or diffuses to be a comprehensive biosecurity treatment. This is because insecticide may not penetrate materials as effectively as fumigation or heat treatment. Additionally, some stakeholders have raised concerns about the potential health risks of insecticide coming into contact with goods inside containers.

Under the [khapra beetle urgent actions](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#insecticide-spray), we allowed insecticide spray with a product containing the active constituent deltamethrin as a provisional treatment option only. However, we strongly encourage stakeholders to use methyl bromide fumigation or heat treatment over an insecticide spray. For more information on treatment requirements, please visit: [Methodologies and documents for biosecurity treatments - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/arrival/treatments/treatments-fumigants#insecticide-treatment_2)

1. **Will there be special considerations or conditions placed on rail freight containers in transit to an AA?**

We are considering the biosecurity risks associated with containers that are moved under-bond including those transiting through rural areas by rail and road.

1. **Does the hitchhiker pest programme do surveillance for any of these pests in the states or ports?**

We are undertaking a Hitchhiker Surveillance Program as part of the Hitchhiker Pest Program. It is a key component of Australia’s national biosecurity surveillance system. Its aim is to improve early detection of high priority hitchhiker pests at locations which receive high-risk imported goods and conveyances. We are monitoring locations where hitchhiker pests first enter Australia, including Approved Arrangements (AA) and First Points of Entry. We have also been collaborating with our state counterparts to extend this surveillance beyond these sites.

More broadly, the department manages the National Boader Surveillance Program. Under this program, the department conducts regular surveillance activities at Approved Arrangement sites and First Points of Entry. For more information, please visit: [Pest and disease surveillance at Australia’s borders - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/australia/border-surveillance)

1. **The post code classification search tool which is used for capital rule validation is out of date, when will it be updated?**

We use postcode classifications to manage the risks associated with imported sea containers. Sea containers can inadvertently carry a range of contaminants which could introduce exotic pests and diseases into our environment.

We have begun a review of the postcode classification system for rural and metro locations. With urban sprawl continuing unchecked since the last review, we are now assessing how this growth has evolved and its impact on many outer-metro postcodes. Additionally, the significant investment in regional ports, which occupy some of the larger rural postcodes, will also be a focus.

As part of this review, we aim to establish a clear and defensible policy on how we manage these locations, split postcodes and update outer metro postcodes that may have previously been classified as rural. Stay tuned for updates, as we will share more information as the review progresses.

For more information on the post code classification search tool, please visit: [Postcode delivery classifications - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/online-services/delivery-postcode-classifications)

1. **Is fumigation in containers effective on the insects under the floors or in the packaging?**

The department sets specific treatment requirements for specific pests and products. Treatments must be conducted in accordance with these requirements to be effective. It is important to always check the Biosecurity Import Conditions System (BICON) to understand the relevant import conditions that may apply to your imports, including treatment requirements.

As an example, sea containers treated with methyl bromide fumigation to address the risk of khapra beetle must be fumigated using an [approved treatment rate](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#methyl-bromide-fumigation_2) and in accordance with the [Methyl Bromide Fumigation Methodology](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/arrival/treatments/treatments-fumigants#methyl-bromide-fumigation_2). These treatments require 3 monitoring lines (as specified in the Methyl Bromide Fumigation Methodology), as well as 1 extra monitoring line underneath the container to ensure the underfloor area is effectively treated.

Plastic wrapping and other types of coatings, surfaces and wrappings can be impermeable to gas. Therefore, they must be removed, opened or slashed prior to fumigation in such a way to allow methyl bromide to contact and penetrate the target of the fumigation.

For more information on treatment requirements, please visit:

* [Methodologies and documents for biosecurity treatments - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/arrival/treatments/treatments-fumigants) and
* [Treating cargo outside Australia - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia)
1. **In relation to the Khapra Beetle examples Gunter showed, there was significant costs incurred, are there appropriate fines available to the department for businesses who do not clean containers**

In each of those cases, we did not issue fines to the importer as the source of the contamination was the container and therefore the importers were not at fault. We do not currently have the ability to fine businesses who do not clean containers. In addition, containers can appear to be visually clean prior to packing as the infestations are under the floor and only emerge once a food source has been packed into the container. For this reason, we are focused on using treatments to address the risk.

1. **Does The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry absorb costs related to post border actions?**

The department absorbs most of the costs for inspection and surveillance resulting from detections post biosecurity, unless there is there is clear indication that that there was fault on behalf of the importer. Treatment of goods and packaging remain the responsibility of the importer.

In post border detections or incursions, we work with states and territory governments and have cost-sharing arrangements, as detailed in deeds and agreements. Learn more about these responses at: [How we coordinate a response to an outbreak | Outbreak](https://www.outbreak.gov.au/our-role/response-outbreak)

1. **Would it be possible to transport imported machinery and vehicles in dedicated enclosed carriers which have been allocated only for the transportation of these goods? Or is there a way to verify these carriers with the department and register them considering the time value benefit? Whereas the lead time and workaround involved with the biosecurity officer verification**

All break bulk machinery and vehicles must be cleared through biosecurity control on arrival in Australia at the First Point of Entry. The department will not allow land-bridging of break bulk goods between metro locations without them being clean and free of biosecurity risk material.

Where contamination is found, the department allows vehicles and machines to be moved off wharf to a local metropolitan approved arrangement for cleaning. This must be done via tarping OR through a full enclosed car carrier.

In instances where these forms of containment are not available, our Sea Cargo Policy team will discuss the risk management plan with the importer, including ways to mitigate risks when using other forms of transport (noting that this is still only available within the metro location of discharge).

The only way to transport contaminated machinery and/or vehicles outside the port of discharge to another metro location is via sea.

1. **Are there posters available showing where to look for hitchhiker pests?**

We have a range of resources on our hitchhiker pest webpage, including a poster that details what to look out for in shipping containers. Visit the resources section of our website to download: agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/hitchhiker-pests#resources

1. **Has there been consideration given to issuing training material in languages other than English - conscious about language barriers in our global supply chain community especially when sharing with exporters into Australia.**

One of our posters [focused on container cleanliness](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/7-tips-for-keeping-containers-clean-a4.pdf) has been published in seven languages and is available on our webpage at: [Measures for sea containers under the khapra beetle urgent actions - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/sea-container-measures#posters-infographics-and-videos)

We also contribute internationally through the Sea Container Focus Group to develop global supply chain solutions to address the hitchhiker issue in sea containers. The SCFG has representatives from a range of countries, which means these solutions will go out through those representatives to their own exporters when it comes to implementation.

Furthermore, we are doing a lot of work in the Pacific to implement a new strategy for sea container hygiene in the region. We are collaborating directly with other governments, and asking them to implement the actions with their export industries.

1. **DAFF faced clearance delays last year. With countries added to the BMSB high risk and increased import volumes, how will you be scaling the Hitchhiker Pest Program?**

Scaling current approaches to address the emerging risks of hitchhiker pests is a factor that we are carefully considering. Due to the volume of imports, it is not feasible to simply scale up previous approaches. This is why the Hitchhiker Pest Program is aiming to tackle the problem across the supply chain and whole sea container pathway.

This includes partnering with industry. We want to be able to inspect more sea containers, but acknowledge that would be accompanied by significant trade implications. Accordingly, we are aiming to develop new approved arrangements to allow Biosecurity Industry Participants to conduct external container inspections on containers from medium risk CAL ports. We currently have a Have You Say survey open seeking feedback on this topic, and we encourage you to complete the survey at: [Take survey - Approved arrangements for container inspection and cleaning - Agriculture hub](https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/container-inspection/take-survey)