

AQIS Notice Number MEAT 2001 / 01		PROTOCOL FOR USE OF SHIPPING CONTAINERS FOR ON-PLANT STORAGE AND PROGRESSIVE LOADING	
NSFS Ref 17			
J/ameatsev/2001/January/Neville/AQIS Notice-progressive loading		Contact Officer: Neville Spencer	
Date of Effect 31 January 2001	Date of Expiry Until Further Notice	Technical Services Branch Ph (02) 6271 6650 Fax (02) 6272 5442	
Distribution Category		Distribution Category	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Central & Regional Office <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OIC Inspection Staff Meat Establishments <input type="checkbox"/> Meat Inspection Staff		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Managers, Export Meat Establishments <input type="checkbox"/> Licensed Meat Exporters <input type="checkbox"/> Managers, Export Slaughtering Establishments	
Last Notice this Category 2000/17 2000/16		Last Notice this Category 2000/16	
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE (to be completed by the On Plant Supervisor on the AQIS file copy) Date Received _____ Date Discussed With Management _____ Initial Implementation Date _____ Date Completed _____ Initials _____			

Purpose

This Notice applies to export red meat, game and poultry establishments registered for the operation of “storing meat commodity frozen”.

Scope

To advise industry and AQIS personnel of standards applicable to the use of container system units for permanent cold storage or progressive loading at export meat establishments.

Background

Shipping containers have been used at export meat establishments for many years, either as stand-alone permanent cold storage units, or for the progressive loading of the unit. However use of such systems raises food safety concerns due to non-compliance with the structural requirements that apply to permanent cold store facilities and hygiene hazards present during loading and storage of product. Generally, the construction guidelines for cold stores cannot be met by container system units where they are permanently utilised in place of conventional cold storage. Some areas of concern are: inadequate lighting, insufficient ceiling heights, inadequate marshalling areas, lack of positive docking, and fluted floors presenting difficulties in cleaning etc. The frequent opening and closing of doors may cause a rapid rise in storage temperatures and operating system failures leading to ‘off condition’ of the product. It can also cause condensation on cartons leading to carton damage and subsequent overseas rejections.

In 1991 EMIAC agreed to standards which specified structural and hygiene requirements and management control procedures for the use of such containers. These standards are again detailed in this Notice. Where establishments are unable to comply with the requirements detailed below, other arrangements such as operating within the storage capacity of the establishment or contracting out storage requirements to an independent cold store, must be adopted.

Standards For Progressive Loading

Where meat is progressively loaded into a container within which it will be exported, but the container is not fully loaded in a single operation, the following conditions apply:

1. The maximum time period for progressive loading of shipping containers must be documented and will be dependent on the type of product being loaded. Operational procedures and management controls must also be documented.
2. Refrigeration practices and management procedures of container units must meet the requirements of *Export Meat Orders* Part 13 Divisions 1 & 3 - Handling and Storage of Refrigerated Prescribed Goods. Temperature records are to be retained with other export documentation pertaining to the container for the expected life of the product (up to 2 years). These records are to be made available to AQIS staff on request.
3. Where refrigeration breakdowns occur EMO's 245 or 254 must be followed. Management must immediately check product temperatures. If product is found to be warmer than minus 10 °C (minus 12 °C for EU) then AQIS must be notified and all product in that container must be returned to the blast freezer. Emergency back-up refrigeration must be available on the establishment. A decision on disposition of the product will depend on individual circumstances and condition of the product.
4. Where product is loaded on a number of occasions (> 2) into one container, the loading must be directly from an enclosed loading dock (i.e. positive docking)
5. Containers are to be stored in such a manner that they are readily accessible by AQIS staff. Ladders are not considered an acceptable means of gaining access to containers.
6. Product held in containers must be available for species testing if required.
7. These requirements do not preclude additional overseas country requirements.

Use of Containers in Place of a Traditional Cold Store

Existing container system units located at registered establishments will no longer be accepted for that purpose after 31 January 2001 unless all the construction and equipment requirements as set out in the Construction and Equipment Guidelines for Export Meat, Chapter 21 have been met.

AQIS Responsibilities

Be aware of the standards applicable to the use of container system units for permanent cold storage and progressive loading at export meat establishments and ensure that these standards are maintained.

Further Information

Any additional information and individual establishment approvals should be sought from the responsible Area Technical Manager.

Brian Macdonald

Executive Manager

Meat Inspection and Food Services Group