

CATCH THAT BUG!

The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) is causing chaos for Australia's import supply chains



The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) has caused a trail of destruction as it spreads across Europe, Asia and North America, damaging billion-dollar horticultural industries in its wake. The threat of BMSB-infestation has forced governments around the world to introduce drastic emergency biosecurity measures at the border, particularly in respect to sea freight pathways. Australia, as a country that prides itself on its biosecurity regime, was one of those countries, introducing emergency measures applying to certain goods from target countries for the BMSB season from 1 September 2018 through to 30 April 2019.

BMSB target country list:

- United States of America
- Italy
- Germany
- France
- Russia
- Greece
- Hungary
- Romania
- Georgia
- Japan (heightened vessel surveillance will be the only measure applied).

Whilst essential in safeguarding Australia from a major biosecurity threat, international trade has been adversely impacted by the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) measures with importers reporting

The brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*). Photo by Hectonichus - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63056893>.

“
Next season we will be talking about treatment of goods from high-risk continents rather than high-risk countries, such is the spread of the pest throughout Europe, Asia and other parts of the world.”

significant disruptions to their international supply chain operations, as well as increased costs of importing essential consumer goods.

In extreme instances, total cargo vessels and their loads are being turned away from Australian shores due to detection of the pest.

Paul Zalai, director of the Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) said for those who have been fortunate to have their cargo arrive, many have been adversely affected by the onshore delays caused by inadequate offshore treatment, failure in government systems and processes, and a local industry inadequately prepared to deal with the growing onshore treatment task.

“The direct costs to importers imposed by stevedores for storage and in detention fees imposed by shipping lines for the late return of unpacked empty containers are rapidly escalating, adding to the costs associated with failure to meet supply demands,” Mr Zalai said.

Some freight forwarders have resorted to desperate and expensive measures such as using a combination of sea cargo movements from origin and transshipping cargo at intermediary ports, using airfreight to land goods into Australia. Whilst a legitimate practice, it is anticipated that it will only be a matter of time before cargo arriving by air faces similar biosecurity scrutiny as that by sea with the potential threat of choking major Australian international airports.

“The problem is not going to go away. Indications from the department is that by next season (September to April), we will be talking about treatment of goods from high-risk continents rather than high-risk countries, such is the spread of the pest throughout Europe, Asia and other parts of the world,” Mr Zalai said.

The FTA has been calling for the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources to commission a comprehensive independent review. As a result of our advocacy, an independent review was announced on Thursday 24 January 2019. The review will be conducted by the Inspection-General of Biosecurity Dr. Helen Scott-Orr.

Travis Brooks-Garrett is a director of the Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA). The FTA's full submission can be accessed www.ftalliance.com.au. ■