



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD
20737

October 8, 2009

Dr. Vanessa Findlay
General Manager Horticulture
Plant Biosecurity, Biosecurity Australia
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Canberra Australia

Dear Dr. Findlay:

Thank you for your letter of September 25, 2009, which advised us of Biosecurity Australia's (BA) emergency measures for U.S. citrus and the September 30, 2009, follow-up teleconference with BA and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) officials. We are writing in response to your question about the actions we take to mitigate the risks of the Asian citrus psyllid—ACP (*Diaphorina citri*) being associated with citrus fruit exported to Australia. We respectfully request your rescinding until November 15, 2009, of the emergency measures announced in your September 25, 2009, letter so that we may reach an agreement on your second additional declaration regarding treatment of fruit, based on the following information.

Citrus fruit from areas regulated for ACP must be commercially cleaned of leaves and plant material before being moved from the regulated area. This also applies to all citrus fruit for export to Australia. The fruit does not harbor the psyllid, only new flush leaves and soft twigs. The following commercial packinghouse procedures for citrus are used to remove any possible external contamination from ACP.

LEMON PACKING HOUSE CLEANING PROCEDURES

- Fruit is transported from the field to the packinghouses in bins that carry approximately 1,000 pounds of fruit. When the bins arrive at the packinghouse, they are identified with grower lot and date;
- The bins are emptied at the dumpsite, where chlorinated water is generously applied. The free chlorine concentration is targeted at 200 parts per million;
- Pre-graders visually examine the fruit and eliminate fruit with defects like splits, and rots. Removal of any remaining leaves and litter can occur at this step;
- The lemons next pass through a soak tank heated to between 90-110 degrees Fahrenheit (32-43 degrees Centigrade). The purpose of the soak tank is to apply soda ash that prevents decay. The sodium bicarbonate-chlorine soak tank is used as an alternative. There is no advantage that one system is more efficacious than the other. Either method is common in packinghouses, and serves the same purpose. This wetting step also will be sufficient to rid the fruit of the psyllid;
- Fruit is then passed over brushes applying a cleanser, followed by a fresh water rinse, and water elimination;



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LEMON PACKING HOUSE CLEANING PROCEDURES (CON'T)

- Storage wax is applied containing the fungicide imazalil, which also has mild bactericidal effects. Storage can be up to 90 days at 50-52 degrees Fahrenheit (10-11 degrees Centigrade) at minimum 88 percent relative humidity (RH); however, higher RH is desired to minimize shrinkage;
- After storage, lemons are again sprayed with chlorinated water and visually inspected to eliminate decayed fruits;
- Sodium bicarbonate is then reapplied over brushes and the lemons rinsed;
- A heated aqueous imazalil flooder (at a tank temperature of 125-135 degrees Fahrenheit/52-57 degrees Centigrade) applies fungicide. Packing wax is applied with the fungicide;
- The lemons are dried and graded before being packed in the customer requested containers; and
- The lemons are then pre-cooled to 37-42 deg Fahrenheit (3-6 degrees Centigrade) for shipment.

ORANGE PACKING HOUSE CLEANING PROCEDURES

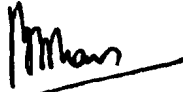
- Fruit is transported from the field to the packinghouses in bins that carry approximately 1,000 pounds of fruit. When the bins arrive at the packinghouse, they are identified with grower lot and date;
- Oranges arrive at the packinghouse and are dumped onto a belt with a chlorinated wash spray. The free chlorine concentration is targeted at 200 PPM;
- Packinghouse graders visually inspect fruit and eliminate any remaining leaf material, long stems and decayed fruit;
- A chlorinated high pressure washer (70-300 pounds per square inch - psi) is used for physical removal of debris like scales. If the psyllid were to be present here, it would be washed off;
- The oranges are then passed through a sodium bicarbonate-chlorine tank for treatment as this prevents fruit from decaying. De-wetting over sponge rollers removes the water from the fruit;
- An aqueous imazalil fungicide application is made followed by waxing. Additional fungicide is applied in the wax;
- The fruit is passed through a dryer to take the stickiness away from the waxed fruit. The dryer operates between 120-180 degrees Fahrenheit (49-82 degrees Centigrade), with enough air flow to evaporate moisture from the wax; and
- The fruit is graded, sized, and packed in the manner the customer requests. Fruit is pre-cooled to 37-42 degrees Fahrenheit (3-6 degrees Centigrade) for shipment.

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We trust that this information provides sufficient assurances that commercially cleaned and packed citrus fruit will not pose a risk of entry of ACP to Australia.

We look forward to your expeditious and favorable response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Murali', is written over a horizontal line.

Murali Bandla Ph. D.
Assistant Deputy Administrator
Phytosanitary Issues Management
Plant Protection and Quarantine