

## **MAFBNZ Sea Container Import Health Standard**

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) is entrusted to protect our natural environment and primary industries by ensuring biosecurity pests do not enter New Zealand. To be effective we need to recognise risks approaching our borders and have measures in place to manage these.

The revised Import Health Standard (IHS) for Sea Containers 2008/ 2009 was developed in close consultation with a selection of industry representatives. The IHS came into effect on 1 October 2009, however MAFBNZ delayed full implementation until 1 March 2010 to give industry time to familiarise themselves with the changes and adapt their systems accordingly.

In the standard, the '12 hour' rule requires import container information to be submitted to MAFBNZ at least 12 hours prior to container discharge in New Zealand. The rule helps MAFBNZ staff to identify biosecurity risks prior to their arrival in New Zealand and thus initiate processes to best manage these in advance. It also helps to identify those containers that pose no risk or minimal risk to New Zealand allowing these to be released from the port environments onto their next destination quickly.

MAFBNZ have established that around 80% of loaded containers already meet the '12 hour' rule prior to 1 March 2010 and we expect this figure to increase.

The first stages of implementation will involve encouraging voluntary compliance with the new '12 rule' whilst MAFBNZ, in conjunction with port companies, monitors compliance levels throughout March. The data will be analysed in April to determine what actions might best achieve increases in compliance rates. To do this, MAFBNZ be back in touch with stakeholders at the beginning of April to discuss the March data and determine next steps.

MAFBNZ wants to work through any concerns or issues that industry might have, and we do not want to be creating unnecessary costs and disruption to the supply chain. At the same time, we also share the desire of many players in the import supply chain to obtain information as early as we can about sea containers so we can do as much of our work as possible before their arrival.

The IHS also allows for industry to develop equivalent systems to manage biosecurity risks as part of their normal business processes and we are working closely with several industry groups who wish to pursue this option.

**ENDS**