Shipload of BMSB sent packing

KVH congratulates the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) for taking the right action in requiring a vessel to reload and depart the Port of Auckland after Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) was found in used vehicles as well as onboard the ship.

The ongoing diligence at the border to detect stink bugs, and the use of BMSB detector dogs to identify risk goods, is pleasing. KVH fully supports MPI's serious steps in managing BMSB risk, including requiring fumigation for all Italian cargo, and believes the right action has been taken in the case outlined below.

A bulk car carrier arrived at Auckland Port on Tuesday 6 February with a cargo of vehicles and machinery from Japan. The vessel visited the high-risk ports of Baltimore and Livorno in November 2017, however as the vessel was fully cleaned prior to loading the cargo from Japan it is believed all organisms were introduced on the Japanese cargo.

During routine surveillance, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) staff found 50 dead Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs (BMSB) and one live specimen. In addition, staff also found one live Yellow Stink Bug. The Yellow Stink Bug has a similar host range as the BMSB and poses a similar risk to New Zealand.

The vessel was directed to cease discharge, raise the ramp and seal the vessel. MPI at Auckland Port issued a direction to treat the vessel, and the cargo therein, with a knock down spray. Following the stand down period a further verification inspection was conducted and more dead BMSB and a total of 19 live Yellow Stink Bug were found.

Simultaneously, MPI staff were assessing the risk associated with the approximately 900 cars that had already been discharged to the Port. A hold was placed on these vehicles preventing their removal from the port. A combination of pestigas and agitation spray was applied to a 20% sample of the discharged vehicles. A small number of dead BMSB were found.

During the afternoon of Wednesday 7 February an MPI detector dog team was deployed to inspect the remaining 628 vehicles on the port. The dog indicated on 26 vehicles, four of which were very strong indications. These four vehicles were sent for heat treatment. A further 12 BMSB were found in the heat treatment chamber following treatment.

In all, MPI have turned around a vessel which wished to discharge around 2000 vehicles. The costs and impacts are significant for importers and shipping lines so although there were certain operational and technical challenges it is truly an example of taking the BMSB issue and biosecurity in general, very seriously.

The detector dog trained in BMSB detection performed very well and the fact MPI have now introduced a workforce that is trained in a range of pathways meant that there were enough personnel used to the port environment to manage the situation. Both the shipping line and the Master were extremely cooperative and were aware of the BMSB issue in New Zealand due to the awareness work that has been undertaken by a number of parties including GIA stakeholders.

Approximately 20 car carriers are due to arrive in New Zealand between 9 February and the end of April, which is the end of the high-risk season for BMSB. A planned approach for the verification and inspection of the vessels and cargo has been developed and will be implemented by MPI.