

RISK BACKGROUND

Fresh asparagus for human consumption

Overview



(Image: Main. D, (2009) *Asparagus*, <https://flic.kr/p/66nAXX> (CC BY-NC 2.0))

Imported asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*) do not require an import permit but must be:

- subject to pre-export inspection by the exporting country
- accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate
- packaged in secure packaging (i.e. insect-proof)
- inspected on-arrival.

Importers and department staff should ensure that the BICON conditions are met and that goods are free from biosecurity risks, as well as the key risks described below.

Key risks

Historically, imported asparagus have been found to have high pest loads which poses an unacceptable risk to Australia. The main pests that may be found on asparagus imports are outlined below.

Thrips

Thrips such as Western flower thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*) and onion thrips (*Thrips tabaci*) are commonly found in consignments of imported asparagus. These plant feeding insects can vector orthospoviruses which may cause considerable economic consequences across a wide range of fruit, vegetable, legume and ornamental crops. For this reason, many thrips are considered to be actionable for Australia. The biosecurity risk posed by thrips is managed by pre-export phytosanitary inspection and certification.

Armyworms

Armyworms from the Noctuidae family, such as the yellow-striped armyworm (*Spodoptera ornithogalli*) are commonly intercepted on fresh asparagus. *S. ornithogalli* is considered to be a general feeder and its larvae can cause damage to plant foliage. Pre-export phytosanitary inspection and certification manages the risk posed by these insects.

Other pathway risks

Fresh asparagus may contain biosecurity risk material including live insects, disease symptoms, and contaminants such as soil, weed seeds, hitchhiker pests and trash.



(Image: Brandauer. J, (2012), *Yellow-striped Armyworm Moth (Spodoptera ornithogalli) on asparagus*, <https://flic.kr/p/d3Uao7> (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0))