

New standard in force for wood packing
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Will deter destructive wood pests

WASHINGTON — Beginning Sept. 16, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will enforce new requirements on imports which contain wood packing materials. The move, aimed at keeping destructive wood pests out of the country, could affect some furniture shipments.

The new standard requires wood packaging materials to be treated for pests, either by heating to a minimum wood core temperature of 56 degrees Celsius for at least 30 minutes, or by fumigation with methyl bromide.

“It simply applies to raw lumber, like pallets, that are not treated in any way,” said Brent Burton, vice president of transportation and logistics for the American Home Furnishings Alliance.

The International Plant Protection Convention approved the new standards in 2002, but enforcement was delayed to give businesses time to comply.

Shipments arriving at U.S. ports soon will be required to display several pieces of information, including the IPPC logo, numbers to signify what country treated the material and what company was responsible for ensuring the proper treatment, and the abbreviation HT (for heat treatment) or MB (for methyl bromide).

Non-compliant shipments will be returned to their country of origin, although USDA inspectors may allow some merchandise to be taken from its packaging if it can be done without pest escape. A fee will be imposed in such cases to cover the cost of supervision. Similar regulations were imposed on Chinese imports after the Asian long-horned beetle was discovered in 1996 in New York and two years later in Chicago. The USDA said the pests can cause significant damage to agricultural and forest resources.

The costs of treating wood packaging material should not be significant, the USDA said.