



Advice to manufacturers of fertilizers and stockfeed July 2003 Contamination of zinc compounds with heavy metals

Australia imports zinc compounds such as zinc sulphate and zinc oxide for use in fertilizers and stockfeed.

Imported zinc compounds are often made from industrial residues and may contain toxic substances such as cadmium and other heavy metals.

Industrial residues containing cadmium and other heavy metals are controlled as hazardous waste under the *Hazardous Waste (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1989 (the Act)*. Importing such residues without a permit is illegal and is an offence under the Act if it is done intentionally, recklessly or negligently.

It is in your interest to ensure that you take steps to avoid committing an offence. It is not sufficient to rely on any certificate of analysis provided by overseas suppliers. A number of shipments of contaminated residues have been accompanied by false certificates of analysis.

You should have a risk management plan in place, including a strategy to ensure that sufficient samples are taken and analysed in a registered laboratory. You need to be able to demonstrate that there is very little risk of contaminated material slipping through undetected.

- If contamination is detected before your imported material is mixed with other materials the government can help to send it back to an overseas supplier.
- If contamination is detected after your imported material is mixed with other materials, you will not be able to send it back and will have to dispose of it in Australia.

Local disposal of contaminated material can be difficult and expensive. Costs are likely to be in the order of \$1,400 per tonne, the material may need to be treated before disposal, and disposal may involve difficult negotiations with government agencies and waste contractors.

Users of premixed feed and fertilizer products containing zinc should consult with their supplier regarding the source of zinc and purity of raw material in use.

What can you do? Contact the Department of the Environment and Heritage or your industry association if you detect contamination in your imported material or want information on contaminated zinc compounds.

Department of the Environment and Heritage

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zinc ash • lead dross • cadmium contaminated fertiliser • electronic & plastic scrap • clinical waste • spent potlinings • used lead acid batteries • nickel cadmium, lithium, batteries