LP 20/2026 Chile Tightens Controls on Vessels Contaminated by Snails Entering Ports for Discharge

Recently, a number of Ro-Ro vessels have had imported vehicles detected with live and dead snails during discharge operations at Chilean ports. As Chile lacks effective on-site eradication methods for snails, all affected vessels have been ordered to re-load the contaminated cargoes and depart for disposal treatment at another port. Re-entry is allowed only after the treatment, causing severe disruption to vessel operations.

The Chilean Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG) has therefore issued Resolution No. 1834-2026 on 4 March 2026, imposing strict quarantine measures against harmful gastropods (snails) on all inbound vehicles, vessels and containers. Where quarantine significant snails are detected at the port of entry, SAG will take biosecurity measures, including mandatory reloading or re-exportation, or sealed transfer to another location under strict supervision.

I. Key Provisions of Resolution No. 1834-2026

To help Members understand the new regulation and ensure compliance in their operations, the key provisions of the Resolution, compiled on the basis of the English translation provided by Chilean correspondent JJR ABOGADOS y CORRESPONSALES LTDA, are summarised as follows.

1. Official Directive and Effective Date

- Legal basis: SAG Resolution No. 1834-2026
- Main purpose: to establish emergency phytosanitary measures for new and used vehicles presenting a potential risk of infestation by gastropods (snails)
- Scope of application: applies to vehicles from any origin, with particular focus on cargoes from ports in China, Japan and South Korea
- Effective date: 16 March 2026

2. Requirements of the Resolution

The new regulation requires that emergency phytosanitary measures be applied to new and used vehicles from any origin that present a risk of gastropod infestation, as well as to the ships and/or containers transporting them.

3. Applicable Vessel Types and Cargo Categories

The new regulation is applicable not only to Ro-Ro vessels, but also new and used vehicles from any origin, the ships transporting them, and containers.

Compliance standard: be free from any developmental stage of the following specific harmful snail species:

- *Cathaica fasciola*
- *Succinea sp.*
- *Bradybaena despecta* (Gray) (syn. *Acusta despecta* A. Gray)
- *Eobania vermiculata*
- Other species the SAG considers of phytosanitary importance

4. Standard Procedures on Vessel Arrival — Inspection and Handling

SAG inspectors will carry out phytosanitary inspections at the authorised port of entry. Where immature or adult snails are detected inside or on vehicles, ships or containers, SAG will, as an emergency phytosanitary measure, immediately order prohibition of entry of the vehicles into the country or mandatory re-export.

In the event that vehicles are detected with the presence of snails of phytosanitary importance that have been offloaded from the ship and/or transported to other locations, pending their importation, SAG will instruct the reloading of these. Additionally, it will arrange for the adoption of mitigation measures in the surrounding area and/or in the holds where such vehicles have been stored.

Where quarantine-significant snails are detected after discharge in vessel holds, terminal yards or slabs, or private warehouses, and no effective treatment is available to eliminate the risk, the following biosecurity measures must be implemented under SAG supervision:

- Perimeter barrier: a perimeter should be established around this area of 10 centimeters wide with salt or a molluscicide determined by SAG, to prevent the spread of the pest;
- Sealed transport: the means of transport (truck or platform) must be completely covered with tarpaulins, anti-aphid nets or another method authorised by SAG, ensuring tight fit and airtight closure along the perimeter, to prevent snails from falling off during transfer;

- Direct transfer: vehicles must be transported directly to the exit point, without intermediate stops and along the route defined by the regional authority of SAG;
- Site disinfestation: once the transfer is completed, the warehouses or storage areas must be cleaned and subjected to phytosanitary disinfestation using superficial flaming (torch with controlled fire); if this cannot be applied, SAG will determine an alternative treatment of equivalent effectiveness;
- Advance notification: the importer must notify the Regional Directorate of SAG in advance of the date of transfer, so that officials may verify compliance with the biosecurity measures on site;
- No movement without approval: until a SAG official has given formal approval, the cargoes must remain immobilised in place; the transfer may not commence before such approval.

II. Risks of Snail Contamination

1. High Concealment and Strong Survival and Reproduction Capacity

Snails favour dark, damp environments and are primarily nocturnal, remaining dormant during the day. They are highly tolerant of cold, heat, starvation and drought. At temperatures below 15 °C or above 33 °C, they enter dormancy and secrete a protective mucous membrane to minimise water loss; mortality occurs only below 5 °C or above 40 °C. Vehicles, containers and mechanical equipment stored in open-air yards are particularly vulnerable to snail intrusion, with snails often hiding in concealed corners that are difficult to detect. Even after prolonged voyages and exposure to the harsh environment of cargo holds, live snails and hatched eggs may still be found at the discharge port.

2. Technical Limitations of Existing Eradication Methods

Conventional eradication methods such as methyl bromide fumigation and heat treatment can damage metallic components, leather seats, electrical systems and paintwork of vehicles, and are therefore unsuitable for vehicle cargoes. In addition, methyl bromide fumigation requires a gastight environment, which is difficult to achieve on board ships.

3. High Disposal Cost and Often Prolonged Delays

In the absence of an effective eradication method, affected vessels must divert to a third-country port for treatment using high-pressure water jetting, manual inspection and other labour-intensive measures, resulting in significant time and cost

losses. Beyond Chile, countries such as Australia and New Zealand also exercise strict controls over biological snail contamination. Past cases – such as 900 contaminated Mercedes-Benz vehicles being ordered to be re-exported to Europe – underscore the scale of potential losses.

III. Advice to Members

1. Strengthen Pre-Loading Preventions

Given the difficulty of eradicating snail contamination, prevention before the incident is of paramount importance. As vehicles, containers, equipment and machinery stored in open-air yards carry a high risk of contamination and enforcement standards are strict, Members are advised to adopt the following pre-loading treatments or preventive measures:

- Salt perimeter barrier: the most cost-effective measure, established around storage areas for vehicles, containers, equipment and machinery;
- Chemical control: common molluscicides include metaldehyde (the first choice), niclosamide, iron phosphate and methiocarb. Where snail contamination has been found on valuable equipment such as vehicles, molluscicides must not be sprayed directly on the equipment (other than tyre surfaces), to avoid leaving visible residue. Molluscicide baits may also be placed around contaminated cargoes to attract and kill snails;
- Cleaning treatment: for contaminated vehicles and other cargoes, high-pressure water jetting combined with manual inspection is a relatively effective method.

2. Strengthen Controls at the Loading Port

- For high-risk ports, notify shippers and charterers in advance to implement preventive controls, and prevent snails from being loaded with the cargo;
- Strengthen on-site inspection at the loading port, focusing on ports with a history of snail contamination incidents;
- Where snails are discovered at the loading port, immediately notify the shipper and charterer, prohibit loading until complete removal has been achieved, and keep photographic and video evidence.

3. In-Transit Dynamic Controls

- Strengthen inspections during the voyage and retain complete inspection photos and video records;

- Where practicable, carry low-toxicity snail baits on board, while strictly regulating storage and use to ensure personnel safety.

4. Carrier's Legal Liability

Chile applies the Hamburg Rules, under which the carrier is liable on the basis of presumed fault or neglect. If loss, damage or delay in respect of the cargo occurs while the cargo is in the carrier's charge, the carrier shall be liable for compensation. The carrier may avoid liability only if it discharges the burden of proving that it, its servants and its agents took all measures that could reasonably be required to avoid the occurrence and its consequences.

CPI extends its thanks to its Chilean correspondent JJR ABOGADOS y CORRESPONSALES LTDA for providing translation of the SAG Resolution and the loss prevention advice set out above. It has instructed the correspondent to monitor and follow up closely on SAG's latest enforcement in respect of the above regulation and will notify Members as soon as further practical operational guidance is obtained.

For more information, please contact Managers of the Association.