

TIPRM Food Industry Guide for Timber Pallets



Timber pallets are robust and effective but they are easily damaged and may increase pest risks if not properly managed. It is important that pallets used are uninfested, uncontaminated and unbroken. This document is prepared for general guidance and is intended to be useful when setting parameters for work with others. Other codes or laws that apply to your or in your customers' jurisdiction may set different requirements.

Incoming pallets:

Deliveries must be inspected before either being placed in the warehouse or, in the case of a supplier or delivery agent without good history, should be inspected before being accepted as delivered.

Poor pallet quality can introduce or favour pests, can result in spillage, can spread mould spores and may result in personal injury. Moulds live on surfaces and are favoured by damp spillages. Pests tend to hitch a ride on damp and or dirty pallets.

Pallets must be clean and in good condition at the time of delivery. Photographic examples of poor pallets are on the next page.

- Pallets shall be visually inspected and rejected if found with any plant fragments, seed, spider web, or pest remains or fragments of remains such as eggs, faeces, hair, skin, nests and bodies.
- Pallets must not have visible damage that could compromise goods.
- Pallets must not have any old wrapping, labels or attachments that appear to have come from a previous use.
- Pallets that exhibit any odour shall be rejected.
- Pallets that have visible food, or excessive dirt or other residue (such as oils) shall be rejected.
- Pallets must not have any protruding nails or plates that sit more than 3 mm above any outer surface potentially exposed to people or goods.
- Pallets shall not be visibly wet and any that are excessively damp on receipt (over 23% mc) must not be brought into the warehouse, but shall be stored outside.
- Suppliers are required to use a slip layer pad under bags or other items with a puncture or tear potential.
- Timber pallets with boards or blocks that are misaligned (+ 5mm), missing, damaged or loose (5 mm movement) shall be rejected.

On receipt of pallets for use:

- Stacks of inward timber pallets shall be kept out of the weather, off the floor (at least 100 mm) and away (at least 400 mm) from walls or other stacks to permit free airflow.
- Ideally, pallets will not be immediately transferred into the warehouse, but held and re-checked before use.
- Timber pallets with protruding splinters (over 5 mm) shall either have the splinters removed before acceptance or use or shall be rejected and the goods repacked.

Pallets in use:

- Pallets for use in the warehouse shall have an initial moisture content under 23% and ideally under 20%.
- Pallets with any sharp edges shall be rejected (timbers should ideally be finished pencil-round)
- Any shrink or stretch wrap, paper or adhesive labelling must be removed before packing or re-packing.
- Pallets that exhibit any odour shall be rejected.
- Pallets that have visible food, dirt or other residue shall be rejected.



Figure 1: Pallets with white surface deposits, splintering and old attached wrapping



Figure 2: Pallets with excessive splitting, protruding nails, shattered stringers.



Figure 3: Split stringer at left, damaged front deckboard and visible food residue.



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Figure 4: Stringer at left deeply split despite nail plate over split. Plate is damaged in use and has wrapping caught on exposed sharp edge. Spider webbing, dead millipedes, food dust and surface mould also present.



Figure 5: Disintegrating deck boards with protruding nails, splinters, and signs of timber decay.



Figure 6: Flour beetle and mouldy milk powder residue on deckboard



Figure 7: Spider webbing between top and bottom deckboards.