

# EP grain ship delayed

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## Key points

- First shipment held back
- Ship cleanliness an issue
- Pay rate concerns

By PAULA THOMPSON

**E**P Grain's first overseas shipment of wheat has been delayed by more than a week after the ship MV Hellenic Sky failed a survey.

As reported in *Stock Journal* last week, the ship was due to take 50,000 tonne of wheat from Port Lincoln to Iraq.

EP Grain general manager Tim Burrow downplayed the incident and said it was "pretty par for the course".

But International Transport Workers' Federation Australia co-ordinator Matt Purcell said the survey failure should not have happened, describing the ship as "a heap".

He said an ITF inspection of the ship's books discovered the crew were being paid below international rates.

"A lot of responsible charterers, such as Rio Tinto and AWB vet ships before they charter them, to make sure the proper conditions and wages are being paid," he said.

"They also vet for safety issues, which has obviously not happened in this case.

"With the economic downturn, there are a lot of ships



**HOLD UP:** Wudinna farmer Ted Stringer was one of the many Eyre Peninsula producers who contributed to the 50,000 tonnes of wheat which was due to be loaded on the MV Hellenic Sky last week, bound for Iraq.

to pick from, so this just shouldn't happen."

Mr Burrow said when the vessel arrived at Port Lincoln last Tuesday it failed a survey on a cleanliness basis.

"There were signs of ore from a previous cargo, the ship hadn't been cleaned out properly," he said.

"The ship's owners (Thasos Shipping Co Ltd) believed it was more expedient to take the ship to Adelaide and to clean it out there."

With this being EP Grain's first full overseas shipment, it was imperative grain quality

was not compromised.

"Obviously, we would have liked to have seen the ship leave by now, but ultimately it's up to the ship's owner to present a ship that is appropriate to take the cargo," Mr Burrow said.

"It's not costing us any more money, it's just delaying the process."

Mr Burrow said the ship was being fumigated at Port Adelaide - after weevils were detected on-board.

It is due to arrive back in Port Lincoln today (Thursday) for loading.

Mr Burrow said he was hopeful the boat would leave Port Lincoln with its cargo by the end of this week.

Mr Purcell said this was an example of the problems that can occur in deregulated grain markets.

"This sort of thing never happened with AWB and the days of the single desk," he said.

"Generally speaking, their charter party agreement had ITF approval or there were labour arrangements in place."

EP Grain chairman Mike Chaseling said the delay would not affect the wheat's sale.