

PVC CLING FILM INFORMATION SHEET

21st January, 2010

CHOICE consumer group has been disseminating ill-informed and misleading information about the health impacts of plastic packaging and other materials for several years and recently released another investigation into plastics used in contact with food.

The information CHOICE provides is not predicated on any consultation with manufacturers of the products it criticises nor does Choice seek comment on the validity of any of the allegations it makes despite admitting "the evidence is inconclusive" and "the level of risk is uncertain". Its assumptions about PVC cling film are ill-informed and damaging and result in distorted messages about safe, cost-effective packaging options designed to wrap a range of food products.

CHOICE has attempted to direct its concerns through the media both locally and abroad, publishing disparaging remarks despite Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) confirming that these products are unlikely to pose a health risk. When CHOICE raised this same issue in 2008, FSANZ conducted a risk assessment of the potential for adverse health effect in consumers of foods packaged in these products and concluded that consumption of these foods was not a danger.

For a copy of FSANZ's Fact Sheet go to:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/educationalmaterial/factsheets/factsheets2008/chemicalsinglassjars3945.cfm>

Every product that is packaged in Australia is subject to the Australian Standard for Plastics and Food Contact. AS 2072 -(1991) is the standard with which all Australian-made films comply. Each product packaged is prone to some level of migration from the packaging, regardless of the type of packaging material or whether it is food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, toiletries or other household goods. This migration must be within levels which are considered safe and acceptable by health and international standards such as EU, MAFF, FDA, USDA, FSANZ and which are designed to ensure product safety.

The Facts about PVC cling film:

Bis-phenol-A: This material is not, and to our knowledge has never been used in the manufacture of PVC cling films in Australia.

Phthalates:

DEHP has historically been used as a plasticiser in PVC films, but in Australia, only in the green films designed for use with fruit and vegetables. This is not considered a health risk as fruit and vegetables have no ability to extract additives from the film.

DEHP, and other phthalates, are presently undergoing a NICNAS assessment, the results of which are yet to be released.

DEHA is used to make most PVC cling films and is approved by Standards around the world, including FSANZ, for this application. Natural coloured films, using DEHA in varying proportions are, designed for use with fresh and frozen meats, seafood, poultry and numerous other general purpose applications. These films may be used safely with fruit and vegetables as well. DEHA is an adipate not a phthalate.

Low Migration Films:

Some foodstuffs, especially high fat foods such as processed meats, cooked poultry and cheeses have a greater ability to extract additives from the film. For these products special "low migration" films have been developed using a blend of plasticisers including a reduced proportion of DEHA. These films are typically blue/violet in colour to distinguish them and may be used with equal safety and confidence in the two previously mentioned applications.

CHOICE suggests that meats and other produce can be wrapped in alternative materials. To date, there is no known alternative capable of replicating PVC film's technical performance or characteristics. For example, the ability of PVC film to breathe is critical so products remain fresh!

Modified atmosphere packaging is possible but is significantly more expensive. It demands a higher weight of various other polymers to be used and is not as practical or as easy to work with when handling most food types.

PVC cling films have been in use for over sixty years during which many millions of tonnes have been produced and used to excellent effect. The Australian PVC film manufacturing industry is unaware of any adverse consumer effects as a consequence of using these products.

There are numerous benefits associated with the use of PVC film including protecting food from contamination to ensure superior hygiene and allowing gas transmission to help retain a product's quality. Well presented, sealed packages, high clarity and a proven low cost provide consumers with a safe, cost effective and practical solution to providing fresh food in optimum condition.



This statement is released jointly by Aperio Group (Australia) Pty Ltd and Berry-Pliant Corporation Australia in conjunction with the Vinyl Council of Australia.

The Vinyl Council of Australia (VCA) is working to advance the sustainability of the vinyl, or PVC, industry in Australia. Its members are drawn across the supply chain of the vinyl industry

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