

MOULDY PALLETS

Mould spores are everywhere but they need four key ingredients in order to activate and grow. In the case of pallets this means: 1) A food source (timber); 2) Moisture; 3) Oxygen; 4) The right temperature. Eliminate one ingredient of the four and the mould cannot survive.

A green wood pallet (on average between 35% and 60% moisture) is a source of food and moisture for mould spores to grow. Mould spores will only be resisted when the moisture content drops below 20%.

Will heat treatment prevent mould?

No. Heat treatment is typically done to kill insects and larvae that may be in the wood. Yes, the heat treatment will also kill mould that is present but it does not dry out the wood and prevent mould from regrowing if the pallet is not dried or stored correctly.

Will chemically fumigated pallets develop mould?

Yes. Again, chemical treatment is primarily for the eradication of pests and insects and will not prohibit future mould growth.

What about air or kiln dried timber?

A pallet dried to below 20% moisture content will not develop mould growth, as long as the pallet is stored correctly and kept at this low moisture content. Air or kiln drying can be a costly process because of the time involved.

So, how can you prevent mould on your pallets?

It's simple. Keep them as dry as possible.

- Store pallets where they can dry and not be rewetted.
- Avoid storing green pallets in closed containers or spaces for long periods of time.
- Store pallets in a covered and ventilated environment, (so air can circulate around the pallet).

My pallets are mouldy, what now?

Don't throw them out just yet. You can take steps to refresh your pallet.

First, you need to kill the mould by drying the pallet to below 20% moisture content. This can be done by air or kiln drying.

Second, fix the look of the pallet. Inactive mould could still be visible on the pallets. Pressure washing the pallets and /or using a diluted 2:1 bleach solution will remove mould stains. (**Note:** Only use bleach solution if it acceptable for use with the intended cargo).

Will mould affect the performance of the pallet?

Not in the short term. Mould primarily grows on the surface of the pallet and does not compromise the structural integrity of the product.

Disclaimer: While all care has been taken with the preparation of this fact sheet, pallet users should obtain their own independent advice.

Information cited and retrieved on 18 July 2014 from:

Trebilcock, B. 2012: http://www.mmh.com/article/tips_for_managing_moldy_pallets

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