



Product
Stewardship
Centre of
Excellence

CASE
STUDY



Agvet product stewardship with *drumMUSTER*

Every year, millions of disposable drums are used by farmers and rural operators across the country. Whereas the use of such drums is unavoidable, burying, burning or landfilling these drums is avoidable. *drumMUSTER* was created by the agvet industry to divert this waste from landfill and ensure that used drums can be safely recycled. Founded in 1998, *drumMUSTER* provides farmers with an environmentally-friendly way of disposing empty agvet chemical containers across Australia.

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Product Stewardship in Action with



ABOUT THE SCHEME

Established in 1998, **drumMUSTER** provides Australian agricultural and veterinary chemical users with a sustainable recycling pathway for eligible empty agvet chemical containers.

drumMUSTER and ChemClear are the stewardship programs of Agsafe. Agsafe Limited was formed in 1993 “as an industry-led non-profit organisation following a commitment to product stewardship by the Board of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemical Association (now CropLife Australia) to ensure safe supply, use and disposal of agricultural and veterinary (agvet) chemicals and containers through the supply chain”.¹

Founded in 2003, ChemClear’s goal is “to reduce the quantity of obsolete agvet chemicals stored on properties and in businesses across Australia, thereby reducing negative impacts on the environment, people and trade in the future”.²

In addition to **drumMUSTER** and ChemClear, Agsafe also operates Training and Member Services stewardship programs. Agsafe’s Training and Member Services stewardship programs ensure that the retailers and wholesale distribution companies understand the multitude of laws and regulations in Australia to ensure the safe distribution, transport and storage of agvet chemicals in the supply chain. Agsafe delivers training to the supply chain workforce (retailers) which fosters a safety culture along the whole supply chain, from the warehouse to the farm gate.

SCHEME DESIGN

The trustee of the **drumMUSTER** levy collection is AgStewardship Australia. AgStewardship collect the \$0.06 cent per litre/kg levy that funds the **drumMUSTER** and ChemClear programs. AgStewardship Australia has four members: CropLife Australia, National Farmers Federation, Animal Medicines Australia and the Veterinary Medicines Distributors of Australia.

drumMUSTER is a voluntary product scheme which manufacturers willingly sign up to. Widespread industry buy-in is important to the success of the scheme and reduce instances of free-riders, who introduce inefficiencies and an element of unfairness into the sector.

Moreover, collaboration across the supply chain from manufacturers, distributors, retailers and farmers has been key to supporting the success of the **drumMUSTER**.

THE COLLECTION PROCESS

drumMUSTER collects eligible non-returnable metal or plastic containers between one litre/kilogram and 205 litre/kilogram in declared content related to:

- agricultural and livestock production
- industrial and recreational pest and weed control
- forestry
- commercial pest control operations
- similar activities conducted by government authorities.³

In order to be part of the scheme, containers must have the **drumMUSTER** ‘eligible container’ logo visible or they will not be accepted. The logo is an indication that a levy has been applied to the product, making it eligible for recycling under the **drumMUSTER** program.⁴ A full list of participating companies is available on the **drumMUSTER** website.

Before eligible containers can be dropped off at one of 825+ locations across Australia,⁵ they must be thoroughly cleaned of residue in line with the Agsafe Effective Drum Rinsing Standards.⁶ This includes triple rinsing the containers to remove all chemical residue from the drum.

This is an industry best-practice that not only reduces waste and saves money and ensuring that all of the agvet chemicals in a drum are utilised, but also ensures that **drumMUSTER**

drums are considered general, rather than hazardous waste.

While perhaps an arduous process at first-glance, rigorous rinsing standards are vital to the **drumMUSTER** program, supporting cost-efficiencies and preventing unnecessary downstream recycling safety issues and processing delays. The collection of dirty, unwashed drums would be mean drums would be classified as hazardous waste, requiring dedicated washing facilities and would ultimately result in the need for a much higher levy.

Used agvet drums are recycled and turned into a range of products including irrigation pipes, barstools (concrete supports), fence posts, underground cable cover, wheelie bins and bollards.

CHALLENGES: INCREASING SCHEME ENGAGEMENT

Recycling over two million containers a year, **drumMUSTER** has diverted over 39 million containers from landfill over its history.⁷ Still, this represents about half of the agvet containers used in Australia, meaning many containers still end up in landfill, impacting ecosystems.⁸ While 100% return rate would be ideal in a perfect world, **drumMUSTER** has a target of achieving 60% of all containers eligible. This is reflective of the financial and logistical costs of increasing engagement, particularly with free-riders.

The industry also faces challenges pertaining to the tyranny of distance, which is a reality of the Australian agricultural sector. The further you are from a collection station, the higher the transportation costs and the more difficult it is to spur collection uptake.

SOLUTIONS: INCREASING COLLABORATION ACROSS SCHEMES

In working to further support engagement in the **drumMUSTER** scheme, Dominique Doyle, General Manager of Agsafe Limited

highlighted the importance of industry engagement around the growing number of product stewardship initiatives entering the agricultural sector, including CropLife's bagMUSTER initiative for the collection and recycling program for agricultural bags.⁹ Other initiatives include the Dairy Australia Silage Wrap program and the National Agricultural Plastics Stewardship Scheme (DAWE).

With a number of exciting new schemes coming online, there will be opportunity for collaboration across schemes, increasing industry awareness and supporting greater ease of collection and recycling across Australia.

NOTE

The content of this case study is information of a general nature sourced from public sources and investigations conducted by the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence. It does not represent advice, direction or endorsement from the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence, nor does it represent the only method or practice to address the topics laid out in this document. Individuals or organisations are encouraged to conduct their own analysis and consideration of strategic options relevant to their situation before taking action in regards to the matters covered.

REFERENCES

¹ <https://www.agsafe.org.au/about-us>

² <https://www.chemclear.org.au/our-story/about-us/>

³ <https://www.drummuster.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Factsheet-drumMUSTER-Program-Information.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.drummuster.org.au/container-recycling/eligible-containers/>

⁵ <https://www.drummuster.org.au/find-a-collection-site/>

⁶ <https://www.drummuster.org.au/container-recycling/drummuster-standard/>

⁷ <https://www.drummuster.org.au/our-story/results/>

⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/programs/landline/2019-06-29/farm-waste:-the-growing-problem-of-plastic-farm/11264632>

⁹ <https://www.croplife.org.au/media/media-releases/introducing-bagmuster-australias-first-not-for-profit-whole-of-industry-genuine-collection-and-recycling-program-for-agricultural-bags/>

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