

Good News Friday Edition 11 – Can we Recycle Meat Trays?



NEW RECYCLING CHANGES

Both the major supermarkets have now made significant commitments to packaging and have introduced some changes worth knowing about... credit where credit is due! Also, they have supported the introduction of a new recycling labelling scheme which has symbols and words to describe what parts of product packaging can be recycled and what can't. This is shown on the label in image 2. For more info see:

<https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/ar/?icmpid=sm-tffp-sustainability-recycling-plastic>

Back in 2018 when I was working with a yellow bin recycling company, I was tasked with finding new markets for plastic products recovered from household recycling bin collections. One of the challenges at this time was that meat trays were not accepted by recyclers. So, if you had recovered a container full of PET drink bottles from the yellow bin with PET meat trays in them, the meat trays were considered to contaminate the PET drink bottles for recycling. 'What?' you say, 'that doesn't seem to make sense, they are both the same plastic.'

Here is the reason why... If you have a look at the last image above of the green meat tray, you will see that it has a layer of plastic film moulded into the tray. I had to carefully separate the film from the tray so you could see it. This is a No 4 plastic LDPE not PET – the tray is in fact made of two plastics not seen with the naked eye. So, when the recycler chops up the PET plastic trays into little pieces before washing and melting back into a plastic ingot for reuse, each little chopped piece of PET plastic has a coating of plastic film – contaminating the purity of the PET. So, what to do? At the time I

made representations to various plastic tray manufacturers, meat producers and one of the large supermarkets.

So, the solution was simple – remove the plastic film from the PET tray and change to have a removal plastic film to seal the top of the tray or wrap the whole tray in cling wrap. Remember if you are uncertain, you can look at the new labelling to check (if they have it).

If you look at image 1 it shows a clear PET tray with the plastic film for sealing the top. Both Coles and Woolies have grass fed beef products in containers like this. Carefully remove the plastic film from the tray, rinse and dry and add to your home Redcycle plastic film collection and return to Woolies or Coles etc for recycling. Rinse out the tray and put it in your yellow lid recycling bin.

[What To Redcycle – Redcycle](#)

The next innovation that Woolies has introduced is a plastic lined and plastic sealed cardboard tray which is image 3. They have made it so the plastic liner for the cardboard tray can be peeled off as well as the plastic seal. Both can be rinsed off and return to the store for recycling by Redcycle. The cardboard tray can of course be placed in your yellow lid recycling bin. Woolies says that the redesigned packaging uses 75 per cent less plastic than the previous packaging and will eliminate 114 tonnes of plastic from the supply chain each year.