CLAIMS

1. A transportable refrigerated container (10) having an interior chamber defined by a floor, a ceiling, a front end, a rear end and two sides, comprising a refrigeration unit (12) for cooling the interior chamber, a plurality of partitions (20) sub-dividing the interior chamber into separate compartments, the partitions (20) being sufficiently sturdy to restrain movement of loaded goods during transportation of the container, and a plurality of unloading doors (16) in at least one of the sides of the container (10), each door (16) affording access only to a selected respective compartment or group of compartments, characterized in that the unloading doors (16) are provided with different secure locking mechanisms, and the partitions (20) allow free circulation of air between the compartments whereby all the compartments are maintained at the same temperature.

2. A container as claimed in claim 1, where the refrigeration unit (12) is located at the front end of the container and a loading door (14) is provided at the rear end of the container (10).

3. A container as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the partitions (20) are movable between an open position, to allow free access between different compartments during loading of the container, and a closed position in which the partitions prevent transported goods from being transferred between compartment.

4. A container as claimed in claim 3, wherein in order to prevent movement during transportation of goods loaded onto roll cages (40), each movable partition comprises a load lock bar (30) extending between the two sides of the container onto which each roll cage (40) may be anchored.

5. A container as claimed in claim 4, wherein each load lock bar (30) is formed of spring biased telescopically collapsible sections (32,34), the ends of the load lock bar being receivable in holes in channels secured to the sides of the container.

6. A container as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein each partition (20) comprises a screen made of a material capable of being folded, rolled or concertinaed.

7. A container as claimed in claim 6, wherein each screen is secured permanently along one edge to one of the sides of the container and is releasably secured

to the opposite side, a tensioning strap being provided to enable the screen to resist movement of the load during transportation of the container.

8. A container as claimed in any one of claim 1 to claim 5, wherein each partition comprises a door formed of rigid sections capable of sliding relative to one another.

9. A container as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a safety system for alerting a remote monitoring station when at least one of the following events is detected, namely:

- one of the doors is opened or left open,
- light is detected within the internal chamber,
- movement is detected in the internal chamber, or
- the temperature in the chamber is sensed to lie outside a predetermined range.

10. A container as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a security system is provided that includes a plurality of cameras and memory for storing video data from the cameras at least during periods when movement is detected within the internal chamber.

11. A container as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the security doors (16) have electronic locks that can be opened by digital codes allocated only to authorized individuals.

12. A container as claimed in claim 11 when appended to claim 10, wherein the security system is operative to store the digital codes employed to open the security doors.

13. A container as claimed in claim 11 or 12, wherein a radio receiver is provided to enable the codes required by the electronic locks to be transmitted by a mobile telephone.

14. A container as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a ramp (50) is associated with each door (16) in the side of the container, the ramp (50) being pivotable between a vertical storage configuration resting within the compartment against the associated door and a deployed position in which the ramp lies outside the container and a free end resting on the ground.

15. A method of distribution of perishable goods from a supply depot to a plurality of customers, utilizing a container according to any preceding claim, which method comprises,

a) at the supply depot

(i) placing the goods on roll cages,

(ii) loading all the roll cages intended for a specific customer into the internal chamber of the container by way of a door at the rear end of the container,

(iii) erecting a partition around the load cages to form a separate compartment accessible from only a selected door, or doors, in the sides of the container,

(iv) repeating steps (i) to (iii) for remaining customers, and

(v) transporting the container to a delivery location convenient for all the customers, and

b) at the delivery location

(i) providing a plurality of delivery vehicles,

(ii) issuing the driver of each delivery vehicle with a key or code for a respective one of the doors in the sides of the container,

(iii) using the delivery vehicles to distribute the roll cages from each securely locked compartment to the intended customer, and

(iv) transporting the container back to the supply depot.