In accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a spray dispenser comprising a container for holding a liquid to be dispensed and a dispensing assembly for extracting liquid from said container, the dispensing assembly comprising a pressure-relief valve for release of excessive pressure in the container and a filter arranged to permit egress of gas from the container through the filter and through the pressure-relief valve, the filter inhibiting egress of liquid from the container through the filter, the pressure-relief valve being closed in the absence of excessive pressure to inhibit ingress of air and contaminants into the container wherein: the filter is in a gas flow path between the interior of the container and the pressure-relief valve, or the pressure-relief valve is in a gas flow path between the interior of the container and the filter.

The spray dispenser of the present invention provides a dispenser particularly suitable for the dispensing of sterile liquids because it permits release of excessive pressure (such as may occur when the liquid contained in the container is irradiated to sterilise the container and its contents), the valve closing when said pressure has been relieved, thus inhibiting ingress of contaminants into the container. Furthermore, the filter inhibits egress of liquid from the container, therefore decreasing the likelihood of any spillage in the event that an overpressure occurs in the container. It is preferred that the pressure-relief valve is closed in the absence of excessive pressure to inhibit ingress of air and contaminants into the container. This is of particular benefit if it is undesirable to allow air into the container, for example, if the container comprises a collapsible liquid-containing portion.

Filters which are typically used in the spray dispenser of the present invention also typically inhibit ingress of contaminants into the container through the pressure relief valve.

For the avoidance of confusion, it is hereby stated that the pressure-relief valve is not a dispensing valve (i.e. a valve through which liquid is, in use, dispensed). The spray

The dispensing assembly may be mountable onto, and optionally dismountable from, the container.

In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a dispensing assembly for use in the spray dispenser assembly of the first aspect of the invention. The dispensing assembly of the second aspect of the present invention may comprise those features mentioned above in relation to the spray dispenser of the first aspect of the present invention.

In accordance with a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a dispensing assembly for use in a spray dispenser to dispense liquid from a container, the dispensing assembly comprising a pressure-relief valve for release of excessive pressure in a container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted and a filter arranged to permit egress of gas from the container through the filter and through the pressure-relief valve, the filter inhibiting egress ~~through the filter~~ of liquid from a container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted, the pressure-relief valve being closed in the absence of excessive pressure in a container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted so as to inhibit ingress of air and contaminants into a container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted, wherein the filter is in a gas flow path between the interior of the container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted and the pressure-relief valve, or the pressure-relief valve is in a gas flow path between the interior of the container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted and the filter.

For the avoidance of confusion, it is hereby stated that the pressure-relief valve is not a dispensing valve (i.e. a valve through which liquid is, in use, dispensed). The dispensing assembly of the present invention will typically be provided with a dispensing valve in addition to the pressure-relief valve.

The filter typically used in the dispensing assembly is capable of inhibiting ingress of contaminants into a container to which the dispensing assembly is fitted.

The dispensing assembly of the third aspect of the present invention may comprise those features described above in