

Food Safety Awareness

Pest Control

Pest Control is important as pests can be both a nuisance and a danger to health. They can attack and contaminate food intended for humans, damage the structure of your premises (such as electric cables) and spread many forms of disease and harmful bacteria that can cause food poisoning. However good the business sooner or later an insect or a rodent will be a threat.

The prevalence of pests near human and animal wastes, human food and environment creates the possibility for them to act as vectors of disease and enable cross-contamination. They can pick up and later excrete or transfer pathogens including Salmonella, E. Coli, Campylobacter and Listeria.

Food hygiene legislation states that businesses must ensure protection against pests and have adequate procedures in place to ensure pests are controlled.

Types of pest

There are 3 main groups of pests that are encountered in food businesses:

- Rodents - rats and mice
- Insects - cockroaches, beetles, flies etc
- Birds - pigeons, seagulls etc.

Signs

Look out for signs of infestation on a regular basis; it only takes a couple of days for an infestation to get out of hand. Vermin such as rodents and cockroaches are very shy. They are unlikely to be seen during the day or when the kitchen is in use unless their hiding places are disturbed or if there is a severe infestation.

Signs of infestation include:

- Presence of small speckled droppings or large rodent faeces in cupboards and under appliances.
- Presence of cockroach egg cases (called oothecas) which are often found in dark cupboards, especially attached to wooden surfaces.

- Evidence of gnawed holes.
- Gnawed goods or packaging.
- Greasy marks along walls or tail streaks.
- Bait being taken from pest traps.
- Animal footprints.
- Urine stains.
- Dead carcasses or moulted 'skins'.
- Musty smell where heavy infestations exist.
- Seeing live vermin, especially inside cupboards or in dark areas.

Prevention

Good hygiene, tidy housekeeping and effective insect exclusion will generally discourage vermin. The best way to deal with pests is to exclude them from your premises completely. Even if you do not have a current problem measures should be taken to ensure that pests cannot enter your premises. There are two main steps to prevention: removing the attraction and stopping access.

Stopping Access

- All external doors should fit their frames closely leaving no gaps. Attach brush strips to any badly fitting doors.
- Install fly screens over external windows and doors where necessary.
- Secure any gaps around pipework or cables that breach external walls, grates on drainage gullies etc with suitable rodent resistant materials such as concrete
- Remember a mouse can squeeze through a space the width of a pencil!
- Fill any cracks in walls, floors and ceilings that could provide harbourage for insects

Removing the attraction

- Examine all food handling and storage areas on a regular basis
- Cleaning must be done regularly including in hard to reach areas such as under/behind equipment
- Clean up spillages immediately
- Store open packs of dry food in containers with lids
- Store food off the floor
- Check food packaging for damage
- Maintain your refuse storage area to avoid attracting rats

- Make sure bins have securely fitted lids
- Make sure bin is emptied and cleaned out on a regular basis
- If you have a commercial wheeled bin make sure the drainage hole bung is in place
- Any vegetation needs to be kept under control to prevent harbourage
- Avoid accumulations of cardboard and redundant equipment
- Rotate stock regularly
- Food and drink should not be left out overnight
- Eliminate sources of water so fix dripping taps or cover toilets
- Check deliveries for sign of pest activity
- Make sure staff know the procedure for reporting any signs of pest activity so action can be taken

Setting up a pest control contract is good practice, but remember that the ultimate responsibility for any pest problem lies with the proprietor of the food business.

What to do if you discover a pest problem

The key to dealing effectively with pest infestations is to identify them in the early stages. This involves regular monitoring of your premises for the signs of pests described above.

When signs of pests are detected, we recommend that you take the following steps to ensure that the health of your customers is not harmed and to remove the infestation:

1. Close the business until the mice, rats or cockroaches have been effectively cleared from food storage, preparation and service areas.
2. Engage a qualified, competent person to survey the premises and carry out such treatment as is necessary to remove the infestation. This means that you should call your pest control contractor or set up a pest control contract if you do not already have one.
3. Contact us to report the problem and gain further advice.
4. Thoroughly clean and disinfect all equipment and surfaces that may have been contaminated by pests, including the floor, removing and disposing of any stock that may have been contaminated by pests.

Care should be taken when cleaning as pest contamination can cause disease. Gloves should be worn.

5. Clean away all rodent droppings, dead cockroaches and cockroach egg cases from the premises.
6. Carry out any maintenance to prevent pests access to your business.
7. Dispose of any food that may have been contaminated by the mice, rats or cockroaches.

A professional pest control company must be engaged to remove the infestation. Treating it yourself is unlikely to be successful as it takes time, expertise and the correct materials are strictly controlled due to their toxicity. Poisons that can be bought in DIY stores will not be of sufficient strength to deal with a severe infestation.

If pest activity is detected by an Environmental Health Officer at your premises you risk the business being closed by Emergency Prohibition Action. If this occurs you will lose trade, gain bad publicity and may have to pay in excess £1000 in costs.

For further information please visit our website www.torbay.gov.uk/pestcontrolinfoodbusinesses



Food Safety Awareness

Temperature Control

The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 require all food business operators to control the temperature of foods that are capable of supporting the growth of harmful bacteria. By controlling the temperature of foods you restrict the growth of bacteria which reduces the risk of food poisoning. As you are aware, bacteria require warmth to live and multiply. Generally their growth is prevented at temperatures of less than 8°C and above 63°C. The range between these two temperatures is where bacteria will grow rapidly. Therefore, you must avoid keeping foods at temperatures within this range.

Chilled foods

Chilled foods must by law be kept at or below 8°C. Please note, it is the temperature of the food itself that is controlled and not the temperature of the air inside the refrigerator. It is recommended to aim for a temperature of 5°C or less to allow for a margin of error below the legal standard. This is particularly true for cabinet fridges where there can be significant temperature rises if you open the door frequently.

Do all cold foods have to be kept chilled?

Some perishable foods may be kept at room temperature as food poisoning bacteria cannot grow in them. These include margarines, butter and fats (but not low fat spread) and most jam and pickles. You should follow the manufacturers or suppliers advice. Uncut egg custard tarts can be kept at room temperatures for up to 24 hours after production. Cooked pies and pasties (providing nothing has been added to them after cooking) and sausage rolls can also be kept at room temperature for up to 24 hours after production. If you plan to leave these foods at room temperature for up to 24 hours, you must have a system in place to make sure you do not exceed the 24 hours.

Raw meat and some fish may be kept at ambient temperature provided they will only be eaten after further processing, such as cooking or curing. But it is good practice to keep all raw meat chilled and to limit the amount of time on display. To maintain quality, fresh fish should be kept in storage and on display at the temperature of melting ice (0°C).

What is the four-hour rule?

The law allows you to keep chilled foods above 8°C whilst it is displayed for sale for a single period of not more than four hours. Sandwiches and cream cakes can be kept at room temperature for up to four hours after production. You must make sure that this time period is kept. You should use a method to make it clear when food went on display and when it should come off (Such as sticky labels or coloured dots).

You must dispose of food at the end of the four hour period unless you are sure that it remains wholesome. In this case you must chill it quickly to 8°C or less until it is used.

Cooking

Thorough cooking is vital in killing harmful bacteria in food. If bacteria survive in food because it is not cooked properly, it could make your customers ill.

Probe Thermometers

A good way of checking that foods are thoroughly cooked is by use of a probe thermometer. When cooking high-risk foods such as poultry, minced/chopped meat (for example burgers and sausages) and rolled joints, you should make sure that the centre of the meat reaches a temperature of at least 70°C for two minutes, or 75°C for 30 seconds. When using a probe thermometer you must make sure that the probe is clean, otherwise it could spread dirt and harmful bacteria to the food you are testing. When a probe has been inserted into food, clean it with hot water and a 'food safe' detergent or with single-use probe wipes.

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It is essential to know that your probe is working properly, so you can rely on its reading. You should check it regularly. The manufacturers instructions should include details of how often a probe needs to be checked and how to tell if it is accurate. A simple way to check a digital probe is to put it in iced water. The readings in iced water should be between -1°C and 1°C . If the reading is outside this limit, you should replace your probe or return it to the manufacturer to be calibrated.

Hot foods

You must keep hot foods at or above 63°C after cooking or re-heating. You must take care to ensure that the equipment you use to keep food hot is capable of maintaining food at 63°C or more.



What is the two-hour rule?

The law allows you to keep hot food at less than 63°C for up to two hours whilst it is displayed for sale. However, if you choose to do this you must have a system to make sure the time limit is kept. At the end of the time period, food must be disposed of unless you are sure it remains wholesome. In this case, you must either quickly chill the food to 8°C or less or heat it to 63°C or more. Remember to keep the food at a safe temperature until it is used.

You should limit the amount of food you keep below 63°C for display purposes and dispose of any that is left over at the end of the two-hour period.

Defrosting

If you defrost any foods you must do this in a way that minimises the risk of harmful bacteria growing or toxins forming in the foods. While they are being defrosted, you must keep foods at a temperature that would not result in a risk to health. Where liquid coming from the defrosting food may present a risk to health (e.g. when defrosting raw meat) you must drain it off adequately. Following defrosting, food must be handled in a way that minimises the risk of harmful bacteria growing or toxins forming (e.g. keeping it in the fridge).

Food Safety Awareness

Cleaning products

Dishing the dirt on cleaning products

It is essential that the correct cleaning products are used for the proper task. A kitchen that looks clean may still be covered in food poisoning bacteria that are invisible to the naked eye.

We frequently visit food businesses who are using the incorrect materials for cleaning. When choosing a cleaning product you should look carefully at what it can and cannot do.

- **Detergents** (e.g. washing up liquid) or Degreasers are required to clean items or areas which are dirty, greasy or oily. They do not kill bacteria. Detergents can be used on all surfaces in the kitchen.
- **Disinfectants** Kill bacteria but do not have cleaning properties. It is important to clean items or areas with detergent before using disinfectants.
- **Sanitisers** are 2 in 1 chemicals which have detergent and disinfectant properties. When used in food preparation areas they must be of a 'food safe' variety. We recommend the use of sanitisers by all food businesses for cleaning food contact surfaces.
- **Anti bacterial products** may or may not clean and disinfect. Check the label of these products to see what it does.
- **Sterilisers** kill all harmful bacteria, but does not remove dirt or grease.
- **Bleach** is a disinfectant but should not be used on food contact surfaces because they are not food safe.

Care must be taken with the use of cleaning materials. The manufacturers instructions must always be followed and where protective equipment is suggested this must be used (e.g. the use of gloves).

It is very important that cleaning products are not mixed as toxic gases can be given off that can damage health.

The Dilution rate is how much water to use with the chemical before use. Follow the manufacturers instructions. If cleaning chemicals are too strong or too weak they may not clean or disinfect effectively.

It is a myth that stronger products are better, manufacturers instructions should always be followed for best cleaning and/or disinfection performance.

It is also important to follow the manufacturers instructions on contact time for the chemical to work effectively. This is how long a cleaning chemical needs to be left on the item you are cleaning. Do you have the time, if a product states, that you need to leave it on the surface for 5 minutes before wiping off. Check the contact time.



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Further advice about the best cleaning chemicals for your business can be gained from your supplier.

And remember what good is cleaning if you are using an old dirty cloth? Damp cloths and towels are frequently highly contaminated with bacteria and may just be spreading the bugs from one surface to another. Dirty cloths are an example of something that can cause cross contamination.

If cloths are used it is essential that they are clean and are regularly disinfected by boiling or soaking in a bleach solution.

We recommend the use of disposable paper cleaning towels that are used once then discarded for cleaning food contact surfaces in food businesses. Contact your cleaning materials supplier who will be able to give further information about suitable products.

Fun Facts about Bacteria

One healthy bacterium, given the proper environment, could reproduce into a colony of more than 2 million in just seven hours.

Between one million and 10 million bacteria, clumped together, would cover a pinhead.

Bacteria are not visible to the naked eye.

99% of all bacteria are helpful.

Food Safety Awareness

Use by dates and shelf life

Manufacturers 'Use By'

This is the date until which the manufacturer guarantees the product's safety.

YOU MUST NOT USE / STORE PRODUCTS BEYOND THEIR USE BY DATE.

Premises given 'Use By'

Premises produced and stored perishable high risk foods must have a use by date applied. The shelf life will depend on the foods individual characteristics and usage but for most foods we recommend that foods have a maximum of production day plus 2 days.

Freezing and 'Use By'

It is strongly recommended that you do not freeze down chilled foods which are labelled with a manufacturers use by date. To do so causes the safe shelf life of a product to become unclear. If you find you must then;

- Freeze on day of purchase / Delivery (not on the last day of the foods shelf life)
- Apply a label with the freeze date and defrost date and use on day of defrost.

Ambient stored liquid packed food products with 'Use By's'

e.g Juices/Sauces/Condiments/Dairy Products

These products are often missed for date coding. Aseptically produced or pasteurised packed foods usually have a shelf life which becomes active after packs are opened. Note many condiments must be refrigerated after opening.



STOCK ROTATION / DAY DOT STICKERS

Many methods of stock rotation are used in the catering industry.

We recommend:

- Colour coded day dot system for all foods with a shelf life of less than 7 days. Label with the day the food must be disposed of.
- Foods with Shelf life of more than 7 days - Clear hand written stickers or date gun produced labels with both a Production Date, and a Use by Date.

THOROUGHLY REMOVE ALL DATE CODING INFORMATION WHEN CONTAINERS ARE WASHED.

Delivery Checks

Check dates on all goods that are delivered to the business. Often short dated products are delivered, or have incorrect, missing or illegible dates. These should be returned.

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Food Storage

Lack of adequate refrigeration space and use of poor quality food containers are often a source of food safety problems in commercial kitchens.

Frequent issues include:

- Poor condition split and uncleanable containers
- Over-stocked fridges.
- Stacking food containers directly on top of other foods
- Poor cling filming of foods
- Highly handled dispensing cutlery left fully immersed in stored foods.

Therefore:

- Don't overstock refrigerators
- If stacking food containers, invest in container systems intended for stacking.
- Don't leave serving cutlery in food containers.

The way foods are stored is important for preventing cross contamination and maintaining the quality of foods.

Cross Contamination

The unintentional transfer of microbial contamination from one medium to another i.e. raw meat or dirty hands to ready to eat foods.

Minimise the possibility of this by;

- logical production flows through the kitchen,
- frequent hand washing,
- colour coded chopping boards,
- thorough and timely cleaning of work surfaces and equipment,
- and safe food storage arrangements.



Dry Food Storage

'Dry' good foods are often susceptible to pest attack. Ants, Flies, Flour Beetles, Psocids, Spiders. Place all such foods into food sealed / lidded food containers / food bins. NB Plastic refuse bins and sacks may taint foods they come into contact with. Use food grade containers.

Food Storage & Allergies

Consider how food storage arrangements can be organised so as to minimise the possibility of accidental contamination of foods by the common allergy foods. i.e. don't store nuts above flour bins.

Hygiene

Frequent mechanical removal of contamination of hands using antibacterial hand soap and hot water is one of the best ways of preventing cross contamination in kitchens.

**Think about how you wash your hands.
Do it thoroughly and frequently.**