

Food for Thought

A publication prepared by the Food Unit, Department of Health WA

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Inside this issue:

Introduction	1
Thinking About Becoming a Food Safety Auditor?	1
City of Mandurah Food Borne Investigation	2
Food Monitoring Surveys	3
Notification of Pathogens	4
<i>Buy West, Eat Best</i>	4

Introduction

Welcome to the 10th issue of the Food Unit's Food for Thought Newsletter. This month's publication has information for those wishing to become regulatory food safety auditors in WA and also covers a food bourn investigation, food surveys and food labelling information

Thinking About Becoming a Food Safety Auditor?



Regulatory audits must be arranged by food businesses that are subject to the requirements of Standard 3.2.1 (Food Safety Programs) of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*.

Approved auditors are the only people who can undertake regulatory food safety audits.

The Department of Health WA (DOH) is now accepting applications for the approval of regulatory food safety auditors in WA.

People wishing to be an approved regulatory food safety auditor must apply to the DOH via the [Application for Approval as a Regulatory Food Safety Auditor \(PDF 103KB\)](#).

A regulatory food safety auditor is a person who is approved under the *Food Act 2008* (the Food Act) to audit food businesses required to have a food safety program.

For further information, please visit the [Becoming a Regulatory Food Safety Auditor in WA website](#).

Contact Details:

For contributions, enquiries or feedback regarding the newsletter, please feel more than welcome to contact a member of the Team.

Ph: (08) 9388 4999

Fax: (08) 9382 8119

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WORKSHOP: WA Regulatory Food Safety Auditor Framework

The Department of Health Food Unit would like to invite local government authorised officers and people wishing to become approved regulatory food safety auditors to a free workshop on the WA regulatory food safety auditor framework.

The course will be held on the **19 July 2011 10.00am until 3.00pm** at the Department of Health, Grace Vaughan House, 227 Stubbs Terrace Shenton Park WA 6008

For further information please email Judith Smith from the Food Unit, Judith.smith@health.wa.gov.au

City of Mandurah Food Borne Investigation

In January and February/March 2011, two separate Salmonella typhimurium PFGE 3 outbreaks were associated with a food business operating in Mandurah. Twenty-one individuals were affected, with fourteen being hospitalised. The dates the individuals consumed meals at the food business is displayed in Table 1.

The City of Mandurah (CoM) is the responsible enforcement agency for the food business. The CoM's outbreak investigation involved reviewing both present and past activities, practices and conditions which may have lead to the consumption of unsafe food.

- Risk 1: Garnishes are potentially contaminated with Salmonella at the time of receipt (there was no evidence of Salmonella contamination, although the high faecal contamination of the samples obtained indicate this may be a source)
- Risk 2: Plated meals are contaminated when a food handler wipes the plate with a contaminated chux cloth
- Risk 3: Ready-to-eat food is cross contaminated by a food handler handling raw and ready-to-eat food without changing their gloves or washing their hands

Table 1 – Dates that cases consumed meals at the food business

Outbreak	Confirmed cases	Dates meals consumed	Outbreak length
1	5	26 - 28 January	3 days
2	16	23 February – 26 March	32 days

The CoM's assessment of present activities involved an intense sampling and swabbing regime, monitoring of food handlers' practices during peak times and a series of food safety compliance assessments. The assessment of past activities involved reviewing the food business' processes and procedures, food handler illness reports, interviewing food handlers and obtaining faecal samples from selected food handlers.

A total of 10 faecal samples from food handlers were submitted along with 37 food samples and 28 swabs to PathWest. All results were negative for any type of Salmonella. It was noted that all garnishes (carrot, lettuce and parsley) sampled had unsatisfactory levels for total plate count and E.coli.

The absence of Salmonella in any of the samples and swabs obtained made it difficult to determine the exact cause of the outbreak. However, based on the information gathered through the investigation, the below risks were identified as being the most significant requiring immediate risk management control strategies from the food business:

Outcomes

In response to risk 1, the food business implemented a chlorination process for garnishes to reduce the risk of contamination. Risk 2 and 3 were adequately managed through amending food handler practices. In addition to this, the food business agreed to undertake food handler training provided by the CoM. Due to the food business' and CoM's ongoing commitment and work, it is hoped that future outbreaks will be prevented.

The Food Unit would like to thank the City of Mandurah's Environmental Health team for the food investigation component of this outbreak which enabled a quick resolution.

Recommendation

In some instances, food contamination and exposure to food safety risks may only occur on a plated meal. The Food Unit recommends enforcement agencies consider how food samples are obtained when undertaking sampling at food businesses. It is recommended that food samples include both takeaway and plated meals ready for in-house dining.

Food Monitoring Surveys

National mandatory folic acid fortification of wheat flour for making bread compliance survey

During October 2010 to March 2011 enforcement agencies from WA, QLD, NSW, VIC, SA and TAS carried out the 'National mandatory folic acid fortification of wheat flour for making bread compliance survey' at 21 flour mills producing wheat flour for making bread. The purpose of the survey was to assess how effectively flour mills have implemented the Quality Assurance Arrangement (QAA) as a basis for demonstrating compliance with the folic acid requirements of Standard 2.1.1 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code). Standard 2.1.1 of the Code prescribes the level of fortification between 2 and 3mg/kg of folic acid in wheat flour for making bread.

At each mill a questionnaire incorporating the elements of a QAA as provided in the ISC 'Mandatory Folic Acid Fortification of Wheat Flour for Making Bread - Compliance and Enforcement Model' (Compliance and Enforcement Model) was conducted and one sample of wheat flour for making bread was collected and submitted for folic acid analysis.

Enforcement agencies assessed the QAA documentation and evidence provided by the mills in conjunction with sample test results and in accordance with the Compliance and Enforcement Model, and the survey's Risk Management Strategy.

The variability of the test method used by the laboratory was also taken into consideration with sample test results assessed using the method uncertainty range provided by the laboratory. Enforcement action was only considered after having proper regard to all available evidence, including evidence of steps taken by the mill to achieve compliance.

Outcomes of the assessments confirmed that millers were able to demonstrate that the requirements of the mill's QAA were being achieved. Folic acid was present in all wheat flour samples analysed with five test results outside the test method uncertainty range. For these results, further information and additional evidence was required from the mills including further testing.

Enforcement agencies were able to confirm that the final assessments of the flour mills surveyed found all 21 flour mills had established QAAs or equivalent incorporating a folic acid addition system, and these were confirmed to be an effective approach to compliance with the folic acid requirements of the Code.

The survey report is currently being drafted and considered by the relevant working groups, including consideration of the next steps.

Survey of egg based sauces & salmonella

The complete outline and results of this survey can now be viewed on the Public Health website. Please visit the following link to view the publication in full, [Survey of Egg Based Sauces and Salmonella \(PDF 783KB\)](#).



Notification of Pathogens

Salmonella species, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Shigella* species and verotoxigenic *E.coli* have been the cause of serious food poisoning incidents in Australia. As a consequence, the isolation of these pathogens by a laboratory is subject to mandatory notification requirements under Part 4 of the *Food Regulations 2009*.

Food businesses and laboratories must notify the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department of Health of the suspected presence or isolation of pathogens.

Two forms of notification must be given to the CEO:

1. Immediate oral notice to: (08) 9388 4999 **and**

2. Written notice within 24 hours of oral advice

For further information please view the [Food Act 2008 Fact Sheet 9: The Notification of prescribed Pathogens \(PDF 215KB\)](#).

This document along with the form requirements and a sample form for are available on the [Labs and Analysts webpage](#) on the Public Health website.

Buy West, Eat Best: It just keeps growing



The *Buy West, Eat Best* program has ignited consumer passion for locally grown, farmed, fished and produced food. Apart from the local content criteria, membership of the program requires that food producers, manufacturers and retailers must be compliant with the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*, ensuring the production of safe food. In addition, such entities must have a Quality Assurance (QA) program or quality protocols in place.

Thanks to the support of major and independent retailers, food manufacturers and growers today, the bright green logo can be seen in stores everywhere.

The program has more than 100 members and is growing every week.

There are more growers, producers, manufacturers and retailers out there who can join in and help the Department of Food and Agriculture promote the brilliance of Western Australian food. By meeting the criteria and paying a small fee, food businesses have access to a huge food network, marketing support, opportunities to join together to promote the WA food industry, benefit from inclusion on the [Buy West, Eat Best website](#) and involvement in many other activities throughout the year.

For more information on the *Buy West, Eat Best* program visit the website or call 1800 132 432.

For food enquires please contact the Food Unit on:

Ph: (08) 9388 4999 or email: foodunit@health.wa.gov.au

Thoughts, comments and topic suggestions are also welcomed.