



SCOOP

FOOD INDUSTRY INSIDER

SUMMER 2009



Did you know that it is possible to determine whether food has been handled in an unsafe manner? Council's Environmental Health Officers routinely collect food samples from shops and have them tested for microbiological safety.

What's in YOUR FOOD?



Food samples are taken from randomly selected food premises on Council's list of registered premises. Once a sample is collected, it is placed in a clean sampling bag, sealed and stored in an esky at 5 degrees Celsius. The samples are then delivered by the Environmental Health Officer to a State Government analyst for assessment.

The results from testing can be grouped into the three categories: satisfactory, marginal or unsatisfactory. A satisfactory result signifies that the microbiological limits of the sample are within acceptable limits and that the food is safe. A marginal result has not failed, but indicates that there is bacteria present at low levels.

An unsatisfactory result indicates that there is an unacceptable level of bacteria, indicating poor hygiene and/or food handling practices.

Results are generally forwarded to the proprietor with a letter of explanation and information on safe food handling. A failed or marginal result will often result in the Environmental Health Officer making further enquiries at the premises to observe the food handling practices and provide advice. Re-sampling will occur with any premises that have had marginal or failed results.

Food sampling is a valuable educational tool for EHO's and business alike. Most results come back satisfactory and confirm safe processes in the business.

For more information, contact the Health Services Unit on 9209 6292.

WELCOME TO SCOOP

Welcome to Scoop, a food safety newsletter for food businesses within the City of Port Phillip produced by the Health Services Unit.

Our aim is to keep you up-to-date with the latest developments in the food industry and provide you with information to help you keep food safe.

In this edition, we are pleased to introduce another new topic. Environmental corner – tips on making your food business greener. Many businesses are already beginning to incorporate more energy-efficient and waste-reduction practices which not only benefit the environment but can have cost savings to the business. We explore a few in this issue, and hope these tips may encourage you to do your bit. And we also encourage your business to participate in Council's Challenge to Change program.

Have you ever experienced a webbing-like substance in your dry storage? It is most likely due to the Indian meal moth. In 'The pest in focus' on page 2, we profile this pest and how to prevent it infiltrating your dry storage. We also include information on calibrating your thermometer, and why Environmental Health Officers undertake food sampling.

Happy reading, *The SCOOP Team*



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Our address is 99a Carlisle Street St Kilda (The corner of Carlisle Street and Brighton Road).

The Pest in Focus

Indian Meal Moth



Have you ever seen a webbing-like substance in your dry ingredients storage area? This is very likely evidence of the Indian meal moth. Indian meal moths (*Plodia interpunctella*) are extremely common and often known as 'flour moths', 'pantry moths' or 'pantry pests'.

The moth was given its common name because an early American entomologist (Asa Fitch) discovered it feeding on cornmeal (Indian meal).

Lifecycle

The Indian meal moth has three distinct stages of its lifecycle. Eggs are laid on or near foods such as grain and dried seeds or nuts, and anywhere between 40 and 350 eggs may be laid. In the second stage, caterpillars (larvae) begin spinning silk-like threads throughout the infested food material. This is the webbing that is commonly seen. After about two weeks of feeding they crawl up to the surface of the food material and pupate within a cocoon. In about 30 days the adult moth emerges. In warmer weather, the process takes less time from egg to adult moth.

Identification

The caterpillar of the Indian meal moth loves feasting on foods such as cereal products, dried herbs and fruits, nuts, powdered milk, flour, bird seed.



Detecting webbing in a stored food product is a sure sign you have an infestation. Caterpillars (larvae) may also be seen crawling around and you may notice the cocoons. If you are very observant you may see a fine gritty material known as frass or 'insect poo'.

Infestation action

So what do you do if you notice an infestation? Generally, the best way to ensure your food is suitable is to take all food out of the cupboards and go through each individually. Anything in a loosely sealed container may be suspect. Carefully look for webbing or caterpillars. Any food that is infested must be thrown out straight away. Also make sure you transfer any non-infested foods from bags or open boxes into tightly sealable containers. Check walls and ceilings also. Do not spray food storage areas with insecticide because of the risk of contaminating food.

It is also advisable to thoroughly clean your cupboards to ensure all eggs, webbing and cocoons are removed; vacuum cracks and crevices and look behind appliances or hard-to-reach areas where food waste may be located.

Prevention

- > Ensure dry goods are stored in containers with tight fitting lids.
- > Keep food storage areas clean and clean spills up immediately to prevent attracting Indian meal moths.
- > Avoid purchasing large quantities of bulk items that are consumed slowly.
- > Inspect dry storage areas for signs of infestation.

References:

Stein, D 2008, 'Indian meal moths: a pantry pest', Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, retrieved December 2008, www.pesticide.org/pubs/alts/moths/indianmealmoths.html

Virginia Cooperative Extension 1996, 'Indian meal moth', retrieved December 2008, www.ext.vt.edu/departments/entomology/factsheets/moths.html



TESTING THERMOMETERS MADE EASY

As part of a Food Safety Program, every food business that sells potentially hazardous food, must have a working and accurate thermometer to measure the temperature of food and refrigeration units daily.

To keep the thermometer working accurately, your thermometer will need to be calibrated regularly. You may need to use an external contractor, the manufacturer or distributor to test and calibrate. But you can test your thermometer(s) yourself, using one of the following methods.

Cold temperature testing

- > Pour a mixture of 50% crushed ice and 50% water into a suitable container.
- > Let the mixture stand for five minutes to allow the temperature to stabilise.
- > Place the probe of the thermometer into the mixture.
- > Wait for about two minutes.
- > Write down the reading of the thermometer – it should be 0°C, $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$.

Hot temperature testing

- > Boil tap water.
- > Pour this water into a suitable container.
- > Place the thermometer probe into the boiling water.
- > Wait for about 2 minutes.
- > Write down the temperature of the thermometer – it should be 100°C, $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$.

If the thermometer reads more than plus or minus 1° C difference, it will need to be recalibrated or replaced.

A record of your calibration must be recorded on 'Record 5 – Equipment Calibration Log' of your Food Safety Program.

Source:

State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services, 2004, *Food Safety Program Template for Food Service and Retail businesses*, Ed 1.1, retrieved August 2008, http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/bus/templates/service_retail.htm

Recent Prosecutions

The proprietor of a takeaway food premises in Glen Eira Road, Ripponlea, pleaded 'guilty' in September 2008 at the Melbourne Magistrate's Court for breaches of the *Food Act 1984*.

In summary, the proprietor failed to maintain the premises in a clean and sanitary manner and to maintain fixtures, fittings and equipment in a good state of repair. He received a good behaviour bond and was fined \$5,000 and ordered to pay Council's legal fees.

Environmental Corner

Tips on making your food business greener

Reducing waste across business is becoming an important priority for a growing number of reasons, none the least of them that waste costs money. Reducing your waste can not only save your business money, but can mean you are contributing to protecting the environment.

It is a sad fact that Australia is one of the most prolific garbage producers, per person in the world. Your business can lead by example in helping to turn this statistic around.

Below are some tips that will help you be part of the solution by managing and reducing waste in your business in purchasing, delivery and storage.

Purchasing

- > Print your purchasing ordering sheets double-sided and use recyclable paper wherever possible.
- > Purchase products in concentrated forms, such as cleaning products, to reduce packaging.
- > Talk to suppliers about what options they can offer you to reduce waste. Investigate the potential of returnable/reusable packaging with suppliers.
- > When comparing the costs of suppliers, take into account the waste cost. Disposal costs are increasing and will continue to do so.
- > Ask for your products to be supplied in recyclable packaging.
- > Many large plastic drums, such as detergent and chemical containers, are currently non-recyclable, try to reuse them yourself or return them to your suppliers. Most suppliers will collect, wash and refill drums. Many large plastic drums now carry deposits. If your supplier will not collect them, there may be others who will.

Delivery and storage

- > Purchase locally to reduce petrol and transport costs. Investigate arrangements with key suppliers to take back packaging, e.g. returnable crates, polystyrene boxes.
- > Avoid storing items on top of each other, which often damages food and creates waste.
- > Avoid having products delivered in non-recyclable packaging wherever possible.
- > Minimise spoilage by ensuring that once products are received, they are placed in correct storage as soon as possible, especially fresh produce. Spoilage not only costs in terms of unused products, but also costs again in waste disposal.
- > Rotate stock to avoid out-of-date products.
- > Identify packaging that can become reusable containers for storing food – ensuring, of course, that food hygiene issues are addressed.

References:

Sustainability Victoria 2008, 'Waste Wise Catering Toolkit', retrieved December 2008, http://www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/for_businesses_2211.html



Are you willing to take the 'Challenge 2 Change'?

Challenge 2 Change is a FREE six-week community-wide program, for groups and businesses to undertake simple no-cost actions and reduce electricity use by up to 20 per cent.

To register your business for Challenge 2 Change, contact City of Port Phillip on 9209 6548 or email enviro@portphillip.vic.gov.au

More info at: http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/challenge_to_change.html

