



# FOOD UNIT NOTICE

**SUBJECT:** Safe Handling of Eggs and Products Containing Eggs

**Notice Number:** 10.01

**Date of Issue:** 25/02/2010

**Distribution of Notice:**

Food industry and *Food Act 2008* enforcement agencies.

**Purpose:**

To ensure food businesses are aware of the need to manage the risks involved in the production of eggs and products containing eggs.

**Actions:**

The Department of Health recommends that food businesses:

- Use commercially prepared mayonnaise, aioli or similar sauces that contain egg products; or
- Use pasteurised egg products to manufacture these products.

Pasteurised egg products including egg yolks, liquid egg whites and liquid whole eggs are readily available in Western Australia.

If a food business wishes to manufacture products that contain unpasteurised eggs, then the associated risks must be properly identified and managed and a suitable processing treatment implemented.

**Background:**

The Department of Health confirms that a number of cases of Salmonella infection in Western Australia since October 2009 have been linked to the consumption of improperly handled uncooked or lightly cooked egg products. Investigations by local government Environmental Health Officers and the Department of Health Food Unit



have highlighted the need for consumers and food businesses to properly understand and manage the risks associated with the use and production of egg products.

### **Products containing raw or lightly cooked eggs:**

Several products may contain raw or lightly cooked eggs which include:

- homemade mayonnaise and dressings
- egg butter
- béarnaise and hollandaise sauces
- milkshakes/eggflips
- ice cream
- mousses, tiramisu and other desserts containing raw egg.

A food business must ensure that food products containing egg either:

- are prepared using pasteurised egg products; or
- implement procedures that ensure the microbial safety of the product.

### **Cross contamination considerations:**

WHEN STORING AND HANDLING EGGS, FOOD BUSINESSES MUST TAKE THE SAME PRECAUTIONS AS WHEN HANDLING AND PREPARING OTHER PRIMARY PRODUCTS SUCH AS RAW CHICKEN, MEAT, SEAFOOD AND SALAD INGREDIENTS.

As with other products from animal origins, eggs come into contact with faecal matter and therefore low levels of bacteria including salmonella may be present. It is estimated however, that the proportion of contaminated eggs in the food supply is low. Cracked and dirty eggs are more likely to contain bacteria associated with food borne illness.

For these reasons it is important to correctly store and handle eggs and egg products by:

- Ensuring food handlers wash hands before and after handling eggs
- Storing eggs at 5°C (and never at temperatures over 15°C)



- Only using clean and uncracked eggs which are within their date coding
- Keeping separate from ready to eat food
- Minimising contact between the internal components of an egg and it's external surfaces
- Storing eggs in their original packaging. The packaging ensures that traceability and shelf life information remains with the product.

### **Risk management:**

To minimise the risks involved, food businesses should ensure that:

- Customers are able to be informed of whether a product contains raw or lightly cooked eggs so that they can make an informed decision about whether to consume the product
- Any food product manufactured using raw egg is disposed of if it has not been used within 24 hours
- Products containing egg are stored below 5°C at all times or if this is not practical (i.e. during food preparation), use alternative control methods such as recording information detailing the length of time the product has been out of temperature control to demonstrate compliance with the 2 hour/4 hour rule.
- Sauces and dressings containing raw eggs should have a pH of 4.8 or less. The acid present in vinegar or lemon juice will lower the pH which inhibits or slows the growth of bacteria present but it will not KILL bacteria.

### **Information for enforcement agencies:**

The Food Safety Standards – Chapter 3 of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) – places responsibility on food businesses to manage their food safety risks. The role of an authorised officer is to collect evidence from the food business to determine whether the food safety outcomes are being met and food safety is being adequately managed.

Eggs are a potentially hazardous food product. Authorised officers should be assessing whether or not food businesses are adequately managing the risks involved in the use of egg – in particular compliance with the outcomes of clause 7 of Standard 3.2.2 of the Code if the food business is producing products containing eggs.



Clause 7 of Standard 3.2.2. requires a food business to:

- (a) take all practicable measures to process only safe and suitable food; and
- (b) when processing food:
  - (i) take all necessary steps to prevent the likelihood of food being contaminated; and
  - (ii) where a process step is needed to reduce to safe levels any pathogens that may be present in the food – use a process step that is reasonably known to achieve the microbiological safety of the food.
- (2) A food business must, when processing potentially hazardous food that is not undergoing a pathogen reduction step, ensure that the time the food remains at temperatures that permit the growth of infectious or toxigenic micro-organisms in the food is minimised.

It is also of value for authorised officers to investigate the quality of eggs received and stored by the food business. Standard 2.2.2 of the Code prohibits the sale of cracked and dirty eggs. Cracked and dirty eggs pose a serious risk to safe food production and should not be received or present in a food business.

### **Useful Resources and Websites:**

- Department of Health WA [www.public.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au>
- Australian Egg Corporation Limited [www.aecl.org/resources/codes-of-practice](http://www.aecl.org/resources/codes-of-practice)

### **Contact the Food Unit:**

Any feedback or concerns please utilise the “Food Unit Query” form which can be downloaded from our website:

[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/786/3/food\\_informatio.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/786/3/food_informatio.pm)

Email: [FoodUnit@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:FoodUnit@health.wa.gov.au)

Ph: (08) 9388 4999

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*Note: The information contained in this document covers the food legislation requirements for Western Australia. It is current on the date of publication but may change without notice. The Department of Health is not liable for any costs arising from or associated with decisions based on information here and users should obtain expert advice to satisfy all requirements of the relevant food legislation applicable.*

