

INFORMATION FOR COUNCIL – EGG STAMPING IN RETAIL FOOD BUSINESSES

Information for council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) regarding egg stamping in retail food businesses.

Egg stamping

Under Standard 4.2.5 – *Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg products*, all eggs and containers of packaged egg pulp sold or used in the NSW retail food service sector must be individually stamped with the producer's unique identifier, usually a number or code.

This helps authorities trace eggs back to the farm from their point of sale, enabling those implicated in a foodborne illness incident to be quickly identified, recalled if necessary and its source investigated to prevent the further release of potentially contaminated eggs.

In essence, it provides a safeguard in the event of a food poisoning incident or disease outbreak.

Foodborne illness caused by *Salmonella* is the second most reported cause of outbreaks in

Australia and the mishandling of contaminated eggs is a common factor in these events.

Between 2009 and 2014, there were 52 egg related foodborne illness outbreaks in NSW affecting 914 people with 152 hospitalisations, many linked to the use of raw egg products.

Egg safety practices are essential to reduce the risk of contamination from raw eggs. These include buying eggs from reputable suppliers and never using eggs that are cracked or dirty.

Inspecting eggs in retail food businesses

When inspecting retail food businesses, EHOs conducting inspections should remind retailers that they should not be accepting eggs from suppliers that are **not** stamped.

If a FEW eggs are not stamped

It is reasonable to expect that on some occasions, there may be a small number of unstamped eggs in a carton due to the large volume passing through the grading line. In addition, due to the nature of placing a stamp on a small oval surface, a small number of eggs may be missed in the process and therefore, not stamped.

It is important to note that when a few eggs are unstamped, the ability to trace-back to place of production is maintained as long as the majority of the eggs in the carton are labelled, and that the labelling on the packaging/carton is intact.

In these instances, no action by the EHO is required.

If NO eggs are stamped

If the egg supplier has suffered an equipment failure the Food Authority may grant a grace period from the stamping requirement for a specified time. If this is the case, retailers can request from the supplier a copy of



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the Food Authority letter to confirm the details of the grace period.

If a retail food business is found to be selling or using unstamped eggs and cannot provide evidence from the supplier that a grace period from the stamping requirement has been granted, EHOs should:

- issue a warning notice in the first instance,
- gather evidence on where the eggs were purchased and notify the Food Authority for follow up with the supplier, and
- consider whether the eggs are suitable for use. If eggs are deemed unsuitable i.e. cracked or dirty, take appropriate enforcement action, e.g. seizure and potentially a penalty notice depending on the circumstances.

Farmers markets

Eggs sold at farmers markets also need to meet the egg stamping requirement.

If an egg producer (such as a stall holder at a market) is found to be selling unstamped eggs to a food business (cafes, restaurants, bakeries and grocers), EHOs are required to:

- issue a warning notice in the first instance
- notify the Food Authority for follow up with the supplier.

Unstamped eggs must not be sold (with the exceptions as outlined above)

Egg businesses can be referred to the Food Authority to request a free manual egg stamp to ensure they meet the requirement.

More information

- Call the helpline on 1300 552 406
- Visit the NSW Food Authority website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/eggs/egg-stamping

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).



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