

Charity fish auctions

A charity fish auction has the same requirements for safety and cleanliness as any business selling food. The fish sold must be safe to eat, and properly handled and stored.

What is a charity fish auction?

Some recreational fishing clubs and other non-profit organisations auction fish caught during fishing competitions. Fish caught during the competitions are donated to the club or organisation, which then auctions the fish to the general public, with the money raised going to official charities. Individuals and organisations who supply fish for the auction have a responsibility to ensure that the fish is safe for human consumption.

Legal requirements of charity fish auctions

Obtain a permit

Recreational fishers in NSW are not permitted to sell or auction their catch under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*. However, organisations can apply for a permit from NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), which authorises the sale of fish by auction for a charitable purpose. Auction organisers must submit to DPI the details of fish sold and financial records of the auction.

The permit can be viewed at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0008/279368/Charity-Fish-Auction-Permit-application-form-Oct-10.pdf

Notify the Food Authority

Once a permit has been issued, organisers of charity fish auctions must notify the Authority of the proposed auction (online at www.foodnotify.nsw.gov.au). Failure to notify the Authority may result in future permits not being issued. Organisers of charity fish auctions must comply with sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of the Food Safety Standards, under the Food Standards Code.

Note, the requirements placed on charity fish auctions also apply to charity fish raffles.

Ensure fish sold at auctions is safe to eat

Organisers and participants must ensure that the fish they supply at auction is suitable and safe to eat.

Anyone handling fish for auction must wash their hands before handling fish at any stage, including the weighing, gilling and gutting.

Capture and storage of fish by competitors

- Competitors who provide fish must:
 - have suitable covered containers to store their fish, and

- have enough ice to keep fish cold after capture.
- All storage containers must be cleaned before use to avoid cross contamination. Bait must not be stored in the same container as the fish.
- Fish which are not held live must be killed humanely and quickly and placed on ice (or under refrigeration at <5°C) immediately after capture.
- Fuel and other chemicals must be kept away from the fish.

Storage and handling of fish prior to auction

- At all times, fish to be auctioned must be kept covered on ice or under refrigeration (<5°C).
- It may be necessary to replenish the ice for the fish prior to the auction.
- When fish is to be stored for more than eight hours, it is better placed in a commercial refrigerator.

Handling fish during the auction

- If organisers suspect the fish has not been properly handled or stored, they must not accept the fish for auction.
- During the auction, fish must be kept covered and on ice (or under refrigeration at <5°C).

Gilling and gutting of fish for auction

- All equipment must be cleaned before use, including boards or surfaces used to gill and gut fish. Surfaces such as park bench tops cannot be used to gill and gut fish to be auctioned.
- After gilling and gutting, the fish must be placed back on ice (or under refrigeration at <5°C) and covered.
- All equipment should be cleaned after use.

Consuming seafood

Auction organisers should be aware of the potential risks associated with the consumption of certain fish:

- Scombroid poisoning is caused from eating scombroid and scombroid-like fish (eg tuna, mackerel, mahi-mahi, amberjack etc) on which certain bacteria have grown due to failure to keep the fish cold.
- Puffer fish poisoning can be caused by ingestion of tetrodotoxins found naturally in many species of puffer fish.

- Mercury occurs naturally in large predatory fish such as sharks and billfish. For health reasons, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) advises pregnant women and children up to six years old to limit consumption of these fish (refer to FSANZ website and www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/life-events-and-food/pregnancy/fish-and-mercury-faqs/)

DPI places conditions on the charity auction of sharks and billfish. For more information refer to the Charity Fish Auction Permit application form.

- Escolar or oilfish can cause keriorrhoea (a kind of diarrhoea) in some people. These fish contain an indigestible wax which is a natural laxative. Susceptible people usually develop symptoms 30 minutes to 36 hours after eating the fish. The condition is not ongoing or life threatening. No cooking or handling practices of these fish can prevent keriorrhoea.
- Test results from 2005 revealed elevated levels of dioxin in prawns and bream in Sydney Harbour.
Auction organisers must not accept for auction fish caught in Sydney Harbour.

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 the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

More information

- Visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry
- Refer to Sydney Harbour seafood and dioxin information at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/keeping-food-safe/special-care-foods/sydney-harbour-seafood/
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

Other contacts

NSW Department of Primary Industries 1300 550 474

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).