Standard 4.2.5 - Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg Products

In response to a number of enquiries relating to Standard 4.2.5 Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg Products (the Standard) of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code), and in particular the requirement for individual eggs to be stamped, the Food Unit has developed guidance material to assist the egg industry and local government enforcement agencies. Food Act Fact Sheet 16 has been distributed to all enforcement agencies and is available on the Public Health website.

The Food Unit is developing and managing a centralised register of ‘unique identifiers’ (egg stamps). It is intended that the information contained in the centralised register will be utilised to effectively and efficiently perform a trace-back of implicated eggs and/or egg products in a suspected food-borne disease outbreak investigation.

Enforcement agencies are requested to assist with the development of the centralised register by providing preliminary information on all egg producers and processors to the Food Unit, if they have not already done so.

For further information please contact the Food Unit on (08) 9388 4999 or email foodunit@health.wa.gov.au

Food Act section 121 reporting 2014/15

The Food Unit has released the Food Act section 121 reporting submission form for the 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 reporting period. Enforcement agencies are requested to complete their report and submit it to the Food Unit by 31 August 2015. For further information, including the submission form and letter that has been sent to enforcement agency Chief Executive Officers, please visit the Department of Health website.
Unregistered home food businesses on social media and buy and sell websites

Using social media and selling websites is now considered mainstream and often a more popular form of advertising for some types of businesses. This appears to be the case as the Food Unit has become aware of a growing number of home food businesses advertising food for sale on the internet and social media. The Food Unit often receives complaints regarding home food businesses that are operating unregistered, and this information is provided to the appropriate local government for further investigation. Updates from the local government regarding actions they have taken in response to a complaint are not usually provided to the Food Unit, however recently one local government did provide an update which gave insight into the various actions an enforcement agency can take to address this matter.

Following a complaint received by the Food Unit, authorised officers from the local government conducted onsite visits of two unregistered home food businesses. The home owners were then given written advice to inform that they are not permitted to manufacture or sell any food as an unregistered business and advised of the penalties under the Food Act. The local government reinforced this message by posting information via social media about the growing number of unregister ed home businesses and the legislative requirements. In addition the local government routinely monitors adverts on social media and selling websites to identify any unregistered food businesses.

The Food Unit has a fact sheet on the assessment of businesses that manufacture food which may assist enforcement agencies in the assessment of home food businesses: Food Act Fact Sheet 12 – Assessment of Businesses that Manufacture Food.

Cat cafés

In late 2012 clause 24 of the Code was amended to allow food businesses to permit dogs in their outdoor dining areas. Since then we have seen a number of dog friendly cafés and restaurants established around Australia. In mid last year the first cat café opened in Melbourne which comprises a café on the ground floor and on the first floor an area that houses a number of cats which people pay to visit and interact with. It is expected that enquiries about the establishment of similar cat cafés in Western Australia will be made. To date the Food Unit is aware that an enquiry regarding a similar set up has been received by one local government.

Clause 24 (1) (a) of the Code does not permit live animals in areas in which food is handled (other than live seafood, fish or shellfish). Therefore, where a cat café is proposed the consideration and application of the definition and scope of ‘handling’ as defined under standard 1.1.1 of the Code should be made. So, cats will not be permitted where food (for human consumption) is made, manufactured, produced, collected, extracted, processed, stored, transported, delivered, prepared, treated, preserved, packed, cooked, thawed, served or displayed.
Food safety management at events

The Food Unit, in conjunction with local governments, will shortly commence a project to address administrative and compliance challenges relating to public events and food prepared in residential environments. Temporary and mobile food business, by their nature, trade in many different locations including at markets, festivals and concerts. This can make it more difficult for local governments to administer the Food Act and seek information on food businesses. A major component of this project will be to consider implementing a central state-wide register of temporary and mobile food businesses. Local government participation in this project is essential. If you are interested in participating or have any queries, please contact the Food Unit at foodunit@health.wa.gov.au or phone (08) 9388 4999.

Welcome Aaron and John to the Food Unit

The Food Unit would like to welcome two new officers: Aaron Lim and John Coles.

Aaron joined the Food Unit as a Scientific Officer in April 2015. Aaron has a Food Science and Technology degree from Curtin University and brings with him experience and knowledge in food safety from large scale catering operations for airlines and hospitals. Aaron was most recently employed as a food safety supervisor at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Aaron is working in the Operations Team and will be involved in auditing, sampling and other operational activities.

John joined the Food Unit in March 2015 having worked in local government for over nine years as an Environmental Health Officer. John has worked in regional Western Australia (WA) for two local governments since emigrating from the UK, and worked within two Environmental Health Departments in Wales gaining experience in food safety, housing and public health. John was involved in the adoption of the then voluntary Food Hygiene Rating System Scheme (scores on doors) in Wales, and implementation of the Housing Health Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS). Since joining the Food Unit, John has been working on coordinating food-borne disease outbreak investigations across WA, and is currently undertaking food safety assessments of food businesses ‘not in a district’.

If you have any comments or suggestions, or would like to make a contribution to the next edition of the Food for Thought newsletter, please contact the Food Unit at foodunit@health.wa.gov.au or phone (08) 9388 4999.