



# Summary of onsite investigation process for a food-borne disease outbreak

This step-by-step process is a short summary of the investigation procedure outlined in the [Guidelines for the Environmental Health Investigation of a Food-borne Disease Outbreak](#) (the *Guidelines*). The *Guidelines* are designed to assist *Food Act 2008* authorised officers investigate food-borne disease outbreaks.

## Environmental Health Investigation

1. Request all ill cases to submit faecal samples for laboratory analysis. Contact Department of Health - OzFoodNet on 9388 4811 or 9388 4872 to obtain the necessary PathWest Specimen Request Form. Deliver the request form and faecal specimen collection kits to ill cases (**page 74 of the *Guidelines***).
2. Contact the Department of Health - Food Unit on 9388 4999 to advise of the alleged outbreak.
3. Plan the investigation based on the information provided by either the complainant(s) or the Department of Health – Food Unit (**page 25 of the *Guidelines***).
4. Print the [Suspected Food-borne Disease Incident\(s\) Outbreak Assessment Form](#) (the Form) (**available on page 57 of the *Guidelines***).
5. Undertake an environmental health onsite investigation and record the necessary information on the Form.
6. Obtain samples of all high risk food products or foods that have been implicated in the outbreak for laboratory analysis (**page 41 of the *Guidelines***).
7. Obtain environmental samples (swabs) from the food business' equipment and surfaces that could have contributed to the outbreak for laboratory analysis (**page 45 of the *Guidelines***).
8. Request the food business to undertake thorough cleaning and sanitising of the premises, equipment, fixtures and fittings and food contact surfaces. Provide the food business with the *Fact Sheet: Cleaning and Sanitising for Food Businesses* (**page 63 of the *Guidelines***).
9. Advise the food business to **remove** unsafe food from sale and **enhance** food safety management practices by changing processes or equipment that have contributed to, or caused the outbreak (**page 35 of the *Guidelines***).
10. Confirm food handlers have the appropriate skills and knowledge to complete their activities, and ensure that any ill food handlers are not involved in the handling of food (**page 35 of the *Guidelines***).

11. Communicate the environmental health investigation findings to the Department of Health - Food Unit (**page 50 of the *Guidelines***).
12. Respond appropriately to the ill cases who have reported their illness/complaint directly to the local government (**page 50 of the *Guidelines***).
13. Increase frequency of regulatory monitoring of the food business to confirm compliance with the appropriate legislation (**page 34 of the *Guidelines***).

## Important contact details

### Department of Health - Food Unit

Phone: 9388 4999

Fax: 9382 8119

E-mail: [foodsafety@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:foodsafety@health.wa.gov.au)

Hours of contact: 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday

### Department of Health - OzFoodNet

Phone: 9388 4872 or 9388 4811

Facsimile: (08) 9388 4848

E-mail: [OzfoodnetWA@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:OzfoodnetWA@health.wa.gov.au)

Hours of contact: 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday

### PathWest - Food Laboratory

Jenny Green (Senior Scientist)

Phone: 9346 2165

Fax: 9381 7139

E-mail: [jennifer.green2@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:jennifer.green2@health.wa.gov.au)

Hours of contact: 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday

### PathWest - Water Laboratory

Cindy Myers (Senior Scientist)

Water Examination Laboratory

Phone: (08) 9346 2583

Facsimile: (08) 9381 7139

E-mail: [cindy.myers@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:cindy.myers@health.wa.gov.au)

Hours of contact: 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday

### Department of Health - Public Health Units

*Outside the Perth metropolitan area*

Coastal and Wheatbelt (Northam): 9622 4320

Gascoyne (Carnarvon): 9941 0515 or 99410519

Goldfields (Kalgoorlie): 9080 8200

Great Southern (Albany): 9842 7525

Kimberley (Broome): 9194 1630

Midwest (Geraldton): 9956 1965

Pilbara (South Hedland): 9172 8306

South West (Bunbury): 9781 2350