

Developing a Food Safety Program:

Pre-requisite programs

Pest Control

A food business must take all practicable measures to prevent pests entering the food premises and take all practicable measures to eradicate and prevent the harbourage of pests on the food premises and those parts of vehicles that are used to transport food

Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code Std 3.2.2 Div 6 Clause 24 (1)

Introduction

A pest control program describes procedures and control measures that ensure food products and premises are protected from contamination by pests and pesticides. Pests include rodents (mice and rats), ants, insects, spiders, cockroaches, and birds. In some areas, larger animals such as cats or possums may also pose a risk to food safety. Businesses in rural areas may need to manage seasonal infestations by pests such as crickets, locusts or mice.

Effective pest control helps to maintain sanitary manufacturing conditions. Pests can carry diseases that are transmissible to humans and can contaminate raw materials, product and manufacturing equipment, compromising the safety and quality of food. Pests can also physically damage packaging and products, causing spoilage and waste.

Preparing and implementing a pest control program

A pest control program describes the preventative measures you use to deter pests from entering your premises. It also describes what corrective actions you will take if pest activity is detected on site. Key elements include:

1. Understanding what your site needs

Your pest control program needs to consider:

- Location and size of your site
- Types of food manufactured and stored
- The pests most likely to affect your site and whether pest activity is linked to climate and seasons
- Expected signs of pest activity (animal droppings, fur, etc)
- Areas where pests are likely to be found, how they may enter the premises, such as under and behind appliances and processing equipment, under washing facilities, inside wall cavities and cupboards, pallets, and packaging
- Outside areas that can provide harbourage for pests

2. Develop a procedure describing how you will manage pests

Procedures describing how to inspect for pest activity and conduct any treatments should include:

- The pest control methods used, noting that pesticides or pest control devices must be approved for food premises and include safety and expiry information
- A site map showing where any pest control devices or pesticides are located. They should be placed where chemicals or dead pests cannot contaminate food or food contact surfaces
- The frequency and timing of inspections and treatments, including how to record and report signs of pest activity, and how to safely dispose of dead pests
- Corrective actions required after pest activity is recorded or observed

3. Assign responsibility for monitoring results and corrective actions

You may choose to hire a licensed pest control operator to conduct routine checks of the site (Find licensed pest control operator (health.vic.gov.au)). However, it is important to have a dedicated internal staff member(s) to take overall responsibility for the pest control program and liaise with the pest control company as required). Pest control remains your responsibility; ensuring pest control records are reviewed and recommendations are actioned in a timely and effective manner will minimise food safety risks.



A pest sighting log can be a useful tool to allow all staff to record any observations of pest activity. The log can then be referred to by those responsible for conducting inspections. An example of a pest sighting log is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Example of a pest sighting log

FORM 2.12: PEST SIGHTING LOG							
SIGHTING					ACTION		
Date	Name	Pest	Observations	Location	Date	Action taken	Name
2/2/24	Tony C	Mouse	Droppings	Near back roller door	3/2/24	Contractor visit scheduled for 4/2/24	Katrina

4. Establish documentation and record keeping

All activities relating to the implementation of your pest control program need to be supported by accurate documentation. Records of pest inspections and pest treatments can help identify seasonal trends and improve your understanding of the site’s pest management needs.

Opportunities to reduce food safety risks from pests

Regular review and inspection of your premises can help proactively identify opportunities to prevent pest incursions and reduce the risk of pest-related food contamination.

- Keep uncovered food away from pest control devices
- Where possible, include mesh screens on windows, doors and other openings, and install weather strips at the base of doors
- Keep doors closed when not in use
- Enclose food manufacturing areas as much as possible
- Keep the premises and surrounding areas clean and tidy
- Ensure there are no cracks, holes or gaps in ceilings, walls and floors, and that there is sealing around service pipes and wires
- Regularly remove rubbish and keep waste in sealed containers

Verification of your pest control program

Verification of pre-requisite programs is an important element of your food safety program and involves ensuring that activities designed to manage food safety have been effectively implemented and are working as intended.

Your pest control program can be verified by:

- Internal and external audits
- Routine GMP audits
- Document reviews and sign-off e.g. checks of bait stations, pest sighting register
- Completion of corrective actions and follow-up of sightings and recommendations

An effectively implemented pest control program that safeguards food products and facilities from pest contamination helps you manage potential food safety hazards linked to pests.

Further information

Further food safety technical information is available at www.dairysafe.vic.gov.au or by contacting Dairy Food Safety Victoria at info@dairysafe.vic.gov.au

References

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (2023). Standard 3.2.2 - Food Safety Practices and General Requirements. Food Standards Australia New Zealand. Available at: https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/documents/3_2_2.pdf

Department of Health. Victoria, A. (2021) *Find a licensed pest control operator*, Department of Health. Victoria, Australia. Available at: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/environmental-health/find-a-licensed-pest-control-operator>

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