

Pest control in food businesses

Common pests such as rats, mice and cockroaches can carry bacteria and viruses, and can contaminate food and food contact surfaces.

Pest sightings, and food contamination due to pests, result in a large number of customer complaints.

Common pests

Pests that can be present in food premises include:

- rodents (eg rats and mice),
- insects (eg cockroaches, flies and ants), and
- birds (eg pigeons).

Where do pests hide?

Pests are generally attracted to food premises as they can provide shelter, water and a food source.

Pests are most active at night and hide in dark places, including:

- under and behind electrical, heating and cooking appliances,
- under washing and hand washing facilities,
- under and in boxes, packaging and food storage containers,
- inside wall cavities,
- in cracks and crevices, and
- behind equipment.

The legal requirements

The Food Standards Code requires food businesses to take all practicable measures to:

- prevent pests entering the food premises, and
- eradicate and prevent the harbourage of pests on the food premises.

Practicable measures to prevent entry of pests include:

- sealing all holes, gaps and cracks in walls and ceilings,
- installing and maintaining flyscreens to windows and door openings,
- keeping doors closed when not in use,
- installing weather strips at the base of doors,

Practicable measures to eradicate and prevent harbourage of pests include:

- regular checks for signs of pests,
- maintaining the food premises and equipment in a clean condition (a cleaning schedule may assist),

- keeping food covered in sealed containers,
- storing food, equipment and food containers above the floor,
- keeping garbage storage areas clean and tidy,
- removing rubbish regularly and making sure that external areas (outside bin areas) are clean and well-maintained,
- removing unused equipment and fixtures from the premises, and
- implementing a suitable pest control program which may require the services of a licensed pest controller.



Appropriately sealed food storage containers

Using a licensed pest controller

While using the services of a licensed pest controller is not a legal requirement, it can help you to demonstrate that you are taking all practicable measures to eradicate and prevent the harbourage of pests. However, steps such as those listed above must also be used to demonstrate and achieve compliance.

A licensed pest controller should provide you with:

- a contract outlining what pests and areas are to be treated and the required frequency of treatments,
- written reports of each treatment, including any pest activity, chemicals used and recommended actions required of the proprietor,
- a map showing the location of all bait stations, and
- information on the chemicals used.

If you perform pest control treatments yourself, make sure that any chemicals or baits used are suitable and approved for use in food premises and do not contaminate food or food contact surfaces.

What happens after an inspection?

If an authorised officer from the NSW Food Authority or local council identifies a pest control issue that needs to be rectified, a variety of compliance actions can be initiated.

For further information on compliance action, see the NSW Food Authority *Compliance and Enforcement Policy* at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry_pdf/compliance-enforcement-policy.pdf

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.

More information

- Your local council environmental health officer can help you with any questions you have about inspection findings or compliance action. They can help clarify what work needs to be done, and in what timeframe.
- visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

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).