

Controlling pests in your food business

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A good pest management plan ensures that food and food contact surfaces are protected from contamination by pests. It also helps food businesses demonstrate that they are taking all practicable measures to eradicate and prevent the harbourage of pests as required by *Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 Clause 24*.

Common pests to look out for	What to look for
Rodents (rats and mice)	Droppings, grease marks, chewed packaging/wiring
Cockroaches	Strange odours, droppings and egg cases
Flies	Increase in numbers, maggots
Ants	Increase in numbers
Moths and weevils in dry products	Webbing or larvae in dry goods
Birds (pigeons, seagulls)	Droppings, nests, sound

Where to look for pests?

Pests are most active at night and hide in warm, dark places. Therefore, you should be on the lookout for signs of pest activity. Grab a torch and look under and behind electrical, heating and cooking appliances, under sinks, under benches, inside wall cavities, around boxes, packaging and in storage areas, behind equipment and in cracks/crevices.

Concern should be raised if pests are observed during the day. Immediate action should be taken.

What is a preventative pest control program?

The first and most important steps in a pest control program may not be what you think. Before you start spraying or laying baits there are several preventative actions you can take to reduce the need for chemical pest control.

Premises maintenance

- Seal all cracks and holes in ceilings, walls and floors including around service pipes
- Install fly screens and door seals
- Consider air curtains at door entries
- Keep doors and windows closed, use self-closing doors
- Enclose food preparation areas as much as possible
- Fix leaks and reduce water/moisture to reduce access to water source for pests
- Provide adequate lighting so that pests can be detected quickly.

Cleanliness and hygiene

- Clean under and behind equipment on a regular basis
- Move equipment for thorough cleaning and to help check for pest activity
- Ensure surfaces are cleaned daily
- Ensure food and equipment are kept off the floor
- Display food under covers or enclosed display cabinets
- Cardboard boxes can attract pests - reduce cardboard use and storage and promptly discard of unwanted cardboard in your premises.

Food and waste management

- Keep all food covered when not in use and use pest proof containers to store them in
- Ensure good stock rotation of food (first in, first out)
- Keep external bins sealed, regularly emptied and clean
- Ensure rubbish in your food business is removed daily.

Staff training and monitoring

- Train staff to recognise pest signs and ensure they know to report any pest activity
- Conduct regular checks in all areas for signs of pests (developing a checklist for this will ensure staff know which areas to check)
- Grab a torch and look in dark and hard to reach areas.

What to do when you notice signs of pest activity?

If you notice pest activity in your food business, you need to act immediately

- You must cover or remove any exposed food to prevent contamination
- Dispose of any food that may have been contaminated by pests
- Clean and sanitise all affected areas
- Engage a licensed pest control service or purchase and use only poisons and chemicals approved for use in food establishments (read labels carefully)
- If you use a pest control operator, make sure you review the pest control report provided by them as there is usually some cleaning, maintenance and better housekeeping recommendations provided that will help with pest issues in the future
- Determine how the pests got in and conduct maintenance to prevent entry
- Continue to inspect and monitor.

What if pest activity is observed during my routine risk assessment?

If pests or pest activity can be seen during your routine food business risk assessment the officer will issue you with an Improvement Notice to take action to control the pests. You will usually have 48 hours to do this, and an officer will return after this time to ensure you have acted and the situation has improved. You should take immediate action on receipt of the notice to ensure compliance with the food safety standards and to protect your food business from any further enforcement action.

Regular checks after this time are important to ensure you have taken sufficient action to control and eradicate the pests.

Need more info?

Contact the City's Health Services on (08) 9267 9267 or speak with your Environmental Health Officer on your next inspection.