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**Refuse and  
Environment**

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15 November 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

**The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006  
Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 on Hygiene of Foodstuffs  
*E. coli* O157: Control of Cross-contamination in food premises that handle raw and ready to eat foods.**

I am writing to advise you that the Food Standards Agency has issued guidance for food businesses to clarify the steps you need to take to control the risk of food becoming contaminated by *E. coli* O157 and what you should be doing to protect your customers.

Food safety officers will also follow the guidance when inspecting businesses in the area, and will use this to consider enforcement action where the risk of contamination by *E. coli* O157 is not being controlled adequately.

This guidance has been developed in response to research carried out following serious outbreaks in Scotland in 1996 and Wales in 2005 where people died as a result of eating contaminated food. Both outbreaks were attributed to cross-contamination arising from poor handling of food. Although *E. coli* is the key focus of this guidance, the measures outlined will also help to control the risks posed of other bacteria, such as Campylobacter and Salmonella.

**Key measures**

Some of the key measures highlighted in the guidance are:

- The identification of separate work areas, surfaces and equipment for raw and ready-to-eat foods
- The use of separate complex equipment, such as vacuum-packing machines, slicers, and mincers for raw and ready-to-eat foods
- That hand washing should be carried out using a recognised technique; anti-bacterial gels **must not** be used instead of thorough hand washing
- Disinfectants and sanitisers must meet officially recognised standards, be able to control the key food poisoning bacteria and should be used as instructed by the manufacturer.

Continued.

I enclose a brief fact sheet, "*E coli O157: An invisible threat to your business*" summarising the guidance, but strongly recommend that you also read the guidance and the associated Q&A's, which can be found at the link below.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide>

May I remind you that it is a legal requirement for Food Business Operators to review their food safety management system (FSMS) on a periodic basis or following new significant guidance such as this. As such, your FSMS should be reviewed and amended as necessary to ensure that the risk of contamination by *E. coli* O157 is addressed.

If your business uses the Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) pack, the additional information to consider this guidance can be added to the 'Safe Methods' in your pack. As such, Cambridge City Council has produced a help sheet (enclosed) to assist with these amendments to ensure that your business has adequately demonstrated the revised risks. You will need to ensure that the details represent what you do and how you control the risks specifically at your premises; our help sheet is **only an example** and **should not** be used unchanged. I have also included a new Safe Method Completion Record to be signed by the Food Business Operator, or suitable person to demonstrate that the pack has been reviewed and changes made accordingly. I have also enclosed a new Staff Training Record sheet to allow you to record the revised training given to your staff making them aware of the changes that have been made to the Safe Methods, as this is likely to affect their day-to-day working practices.

Whilst it is a legal requirement to have a documented food safety management system, it does not necessary need to be the SFBB pack. Therefore, if you do not use this pack, you need to review and amend your own food safety management system accordingly ensuring that you addressed the risks and then adhere to what you have stated. The purpose of the documented system is not only to have it available, but also to ensure that it is followed.

I cannot over-emphasise the importance of reviewing your food safety management system in light of this guidance, as although in the past your safe methods may have been acceptable, with the introduction of this new guidance, if left un-reviewed, they may not.

During our inspections, we will expect to see revised food safety management systems and that measures are in place to ensure that the risks posed by *E. coli* and other cross contamination is addressed. If we fail to see such measures we will instigate the necessary enforcement action.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this letter further, please contact the Food and Occupational Safety team on 01223 457900. To obtain new sections of the SFBB pack, they can be ordered or downloaded from [www.food.gov.uk/sfbb](http://www.food.gov.uk/sfbb).

Yours faithfully

*Frank Harrison*

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Team Leader  
Food & Occupational Safety