

Food Safety Enforcement Plan 2020/21

Service Aims and Objectives

Through this plan, the London Port Health Authority (LPHA) aims to:-

- Ensure compliance with legislation related to imported food and animal feed to protect food safety and animal health
- Deliver a high quality, accessible and responsive service to protect, enhance, and improve public, environmental, and animal health throughout the London Port Health district

This Plan aims to ensure that our enforcement remains targeted, proportionate, consistent and transparent, and sets out the framework for its delivery. It has been prepared as required by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the content of this Plan provides the basis upon which the LPHA will be monitored and audited by the FSA.

The LPHA also has responsibility for Animal Feeding Stuffs, Shellfish Classification, Infectious Disease Control, Pollution Control and Pest Control.

Shellfish classification forms one of the many tasks performed by the River Division; there are 15 shellfish beds within the Authority's area and 5 beds are monitored on a contractual basis for Swale Borough Council, plus additional samples are taken for FSA projects, as required.

Scope of the Food and Animal Feed Service

The LPHA is responsible for enforcing legal requirements relating to food safety and food standards for all food and animal feed that is imported through the ports within LPHA area. This includes:

- Operation of the Border Control Posts at London Gateway Port, Port of Tilbury, Sheerness and Thamesport.
- Monitoring for illegal food or animal feed imports at any of the ports within the district
- Carrying out documentary, identity and physical checks on imported consignments of Products of Animal Origin (POAO) and products Not of Animal Origin (NAO)
- Making checks of fish catch certificates to ensure compliance with regulations concerning Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
- Sampling food and animal feed for chemical analysis and microbiological examination
- Checking that consignments of imported animal feed comply with the relevant legislation
- Controls relating to food contact materials
- Enforcing contaminants in food legislation
- Verification of organic produce
- Control of infectious diseases and food poisoning, including premises, vessels and aircraft, in liaison with Public Health England
- Control of shellfish harvesting areas including sampling for classification and biotoxin analysis
- Sampling of drinking water supplied to vessels and from fixed points within the port boundary

- Routine boarding of container, cruise, bulk and roll on roll off vessels, and the issuing of Ship Sanitation Certificates.
- Food safety and hygiene inspections in 32 premises and craft at dock locations and London City Airport and 96 floating restaurants on the tidal Thames.

2019/20 Achievements

158 POAO and 138 NAO consignments of food and feed were sampled for chemical and bacteriological contamination.

242 samples of shellfish from the Thames Estuary were taken. For the LPHA, 208 for classification, 6 for norovirus and 34 for biotoxins.

18 POAO unsatisfactory results have been received. 45 NAO unsatisfactory results have been received for chemical, biological and labelling issues. This has resulted in further formal action, including detention and/or destruction of the consignment, for adverse chemical and biological results. Labelling issues are referred to the responsible Trading Standards service at consignment's destination.

Since 30 March 2017, the EU Commission implemented enhanced checks on consignments of meat and meat derived products from Brazil resulting in all consignments being subject to physical examination with 20% of the consignments being also subject to sampling for microbiological standards. This level of enhanced checks was in response to fraudulent activities in Brazil and continue in force at present. This has amounted to 770 samples taken in 2019/20.

50 Food Hygiene/Food Standards inspections were undertaken in 2019/20. There was one voluntary closure and compliance was achieved in a short timescale. Had the Covid-19 outbreak not occurred 100% of inspections would have been achieved. There is one routine food hygiene inspection outstanding and one new business food registration inspection.

Several complaints were dealt with in relation to allergen labelling, pest activity, suspected food poisonings and clandestines.

No service complaints were received in 2019/20.

Food Hygiene and Food Standards Inspections

The Port Health Service undertakes food hygiene and food standards inspections of premises within the Port domain, including Approved premises. The Port is also responsible for the inspection of some fixed craft and moving vessels serving food and drink on the tidal Thames. Food premises airside at London City Airport also come under the Port. Approximately 54 inspections are due in 2020/21. It is hoped that routine inspections will continue once the FSA lifts restrictions due to Covid-19. All visits that are not being achieved due to this restriction are being coded on M3.

Business Recovery Plan

Dependant on the enforced closure of some food businesses under **The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020** and the time that this is going to be in place some of our businesses inspected by the LPHA may require some assistance in order to get back up and running. This assistance may be in relation to re-opening and what action will need to be taken prior to this, advice on waste disposal, sanitisation, pest control, legionella controls due to stagnant water, training for staff. We will need to be pragmatic in our way forward so that these businesses can be assisted.

Hopefully the FSA will give a steer on how we are going to play 'catch up' in relation to any inspections that have been delayed due to the cease of interventions.

Feed and Food Complaints

The Service follows corporate policy in relation to any complaints and we aim to provide a same day response to all consumer complaints on food matters.

Complaints regarding the actual service provided by LPHA are recorded within the Services Internal Quality System (IQS), an investigation is carried out and remedial action is taken where appropriate; this is followed up at regular IQS Management Review meetings.

Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme

It is our policy to contact the Primary Authority when we become aware of an importer not conforming with the relevant import regulations. We also try to identify and contact Primary Authorities following adverse sample results.

The Primary Authority database is always examined to check for any partnerships in relation to any food premises that face interventions.

Advice to Business

The LPHA provides advice and support to business is in line with the FSA's Code of Practice. The Service aims to maintain and build on existing relationships to encourage businesses to meet their legal obligations and to develop best practice.

Where we cannot provide the advice sought, the enquiry will be referred direct to either a dedicated branch of the FSA, Defra or the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

On a routine basis, information regarding new "controls" is sent direct to importers and agents. Where necessary, individual meetings are also held with agents, importers and other trade organisations to clarify and discuss legal issues and best practice.

We also provide updates on current issues and offer advice and support in the use of electronic systems such as the TRACES NT system.

Alternative Enforcement Strategy

The LPHA has also exercised the advice in the Food Law Code of Practice (COP) which allows for an alternative enforcement strategy (AES) for low risk premises, i.e. Food Hygiene category E based on the COP risk rating.

All new registrations will have an initial formal inspection and if rated as an E they will then come under the AES. Under the AES the premises will be due an intervention every 3 years and the intention is that a physical inspection will be carried out every 9 years.

Premises and vessels under the AES will receive a specific questionnaire which will be scrutinised by a competent officer to assess if enough information has been obtained. A follow up telephone call may be necessary. Some premises will receive a follow up visit to verify information on the questionnaire and visits, if necessary, will take place following complaints, ID notifications, changes of activity/management or non-return of questionnaire.

It is the intention that the larger E rated premises within the Port, which have comprehensive HACCP documentation, such as large-scale storage facilities and milling plants will still have a visit at each due intervention.

E rated vessels will receive questionnaires and then random, project-based inspections/intelligence gathering visits will take place which will all be recorded on M3.

Feed and Food Sampling

All samples are taken in accordance with Port Health's Sampling Policy. Details regarding the selection, procurement and preparation of samples are contained in the Service's Sampling Plan.

The main aim of our sampling programme is to proactively detect foods outside specific regulation which may be a threat to public or animal health. In addition, we monitor and sample on a risk basis having regard to information from a range of sources including Rapid Alert notifications, FSA / Defra intelligence, previous adverse sample results, new products and random sampling.

POAO are checked at the frequencies set by the European Commission for each country of origin.

In relation to shellfish, the LPHA works on behalf of the FSA who has both EU and UK statutory responsibilities for ensuring that bivalve molluscs are safe for human consumption and meet stringent bacteriological and classification standards. The LPHA's role includes the implementation of an active and rigorous sampling programme.

Sampling plans will change throughout the year to reflect emerging issues and evidence. Therefore, in 2020/21 the Service will aim to undertake the following sampling:

- 250 NAO food/feed samples. (outside of mandatory controls)
- 172 POAO food/feed samples
- 242 shellfish samples with an additional 60 for Swale Borough Council

Further details can be found in the Port Health Sampling Plan.

Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Infectious Disease

Port Health Authorities have powers and duties to prevent and control risks to human health from infection or contamination, including by chemicals and radiation. This includes investigating incidents relating to foodborne illnesses in premises and on vessels and in relation to infectious disease control

The Service has an Infectious Disease Protocol that has been drawn up in conjunction with Public Health England (PHE). Close liaison takes place between PHE staff and the LPHA following the protocol to ensure control of the situation.

This liaison has been used extensively during the coronavirus outbreak to deal with shipping in the LPHA district including the 7 cruise liners taking up permanent residence in the Port of Tilbury during the outbreak.

Feed and Food Safety Incidents

We are committed to responding promptly to all food or feed safety incidents. The Service has arrangements in place to ensure that it is able to respond to Food Alerts issued by the FSA. Warnings are received electronically, and all urgent Food Alerts receive immediate attention and action where necessary. Out of hours arrangements are in place.

Rapid Alert Notifications issued by the European Commission are sent to a designated Officer who is responsible for their distribution amongst LPHA Officers involved in Imported Food Enforcement. LPHA's database, Port Health Interactive Live Information System (PHILIS) can be used to issue reminders when specific products are subject to control.

Feed, Food Safety and Standards promotional work, and other non-official controls interventions

Regular stakeholder events are held to update the trade and discuss current issues. This opportunity is taken to promote the use of Information Technology to speed clearance times.

