

Fact Sheet

Notifiable contaminants Information for food businesses

The [South Australian Public Health \(Notifiable Contaminants\) Regulations 2020](#) (the Regulation) will come into force on 19 July 2020, and requires specified microorganisms to be reported to SA Health when they are found in food and water by the analysing laboratory service.

The collection of this data will support the [Australian Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy](#), in addition to enabling a national/international profile of the microorganisms of public health significance and their possible sources.

Food and water will include raw, partly processed and ready-to-eat foods. It may also include live plants and animals and also captures bottled water and ice.

Impacts for businesses

For most businesses that conduct food and water testing, these Regulations will not impact normal operations. Notifications will be handled on a case by case basis and where a business can demonstrate that there is no risk to public health, then no further action other than confirmation that adequate controls are in place will be required. SA Health understands that these are 'business as usual' issues experienced by food manufacturers and processors and examples of this may include:

- > Raw ingredients that will be further processed
- > Work in progress
- > New product development where the product has not been released for sale
- > Product that is subject to test and hold procedures

Action may be required where notifiable contaminants are found in products that are in the marketplace. It is already a requirement of food businesses such as manufacturers, wholesalers, importers, to conduct an assessment as to whether a product should be recalled or withdrawn when a micro-organism as per Standard 1.6.1, Schedule 27 is found. SA Health will assist with this decision making process to ensure public health is protected.

The notification process and actions

The details of each notification will be individually reviewed by SA Health, Food and Controlled Drugs Branch and an initial risk assessment will be conducted with information supplied by the business. The response (if any) taken by SA Health will be determined based on risk, and actions will only be taken when there is a potential public health risk.

SA Health or the relevant local council may take graduated and proportionate enforcement actions if a business does not comply with requests for information or other directions as given by an authorised officer.

Where the sample is provided from a business that is regulated by another authority or agency, details of the positive result will be shared with that authority and any follow up actions (if required) will be conducted in conjunction with them. Any actions taken with respect to a food service business will also be conducted in conjunction with authorised officers from the relevant local council. Refer to Figure 1

Reporting notifiable contaminants

The testing laboratory is responsible for notifying SA Health of a confirmed notifiable contaminant. The process for notifying SA Health is set out in the [South Australian Public Health Act 2011](#).



If a food business has reason to believe that the testing laboratory has not notified SA Health of positive samples, it has a responsibility to notify SA Health. This may occur if the testing has been conducted interstate (note interstate laboratories may already have a policy to contact the home jurisdiction due to the requirement to report notifiable contaminants in that State). This should occur within 24 hours of receiving the notification by contacting SA Health's [Food and Controlled Drugs Branch](#).

Preliminary results / presumptive results will not need to be notified, except when associated with an active investigation or at the express request of SA Health.

Positive results which have been detected for the purposes of academic research or for education purposes (unless these results indicate a material risk to public health) are further excluded from the need to notify.

Notifiable contaminants

The presence of the following contaminants must be notified to SA Health:

- > *Campylobacter* (any species)
- > *Clostridium botulinum*
- > *Cryptosporidium* (any species)
- > *Cyclospora* (any species)
- > *Giardia*
- > Hepatitis A
- > Hepatitis E
- > *Listeria* (any species)
- > *Salmonella* (any species)
- > Shiga toxin or vero toxin producing *Escherichia coli*
- > *Shigella* (any species)
- > *Yersinia* (any species)

Or: Any microorganism detected / isolated in a defined food sample for which an 'unacceptable microbiological level' is prescribed and if that level is exceeded in the [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Schedule 27 \(and Standard 1.6.1\)](#).

Or: Where the following micro-organisms are reported at levels classified as 'unsatisfactory' or 'potentially hazardous' in ready to eat (RTE) foods as per Table 1: Interpreting results for testing of pathogenic microorganisms in RTE food in the [Food Standards Australia New Zealand \(FSANZ\) Compendium of Microbiological Criteria for Food](#):

- > *Bacillus cereus*
- > *Clostridium perfringens*
- > Coagulase positive *Staphylococci*
- > *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*

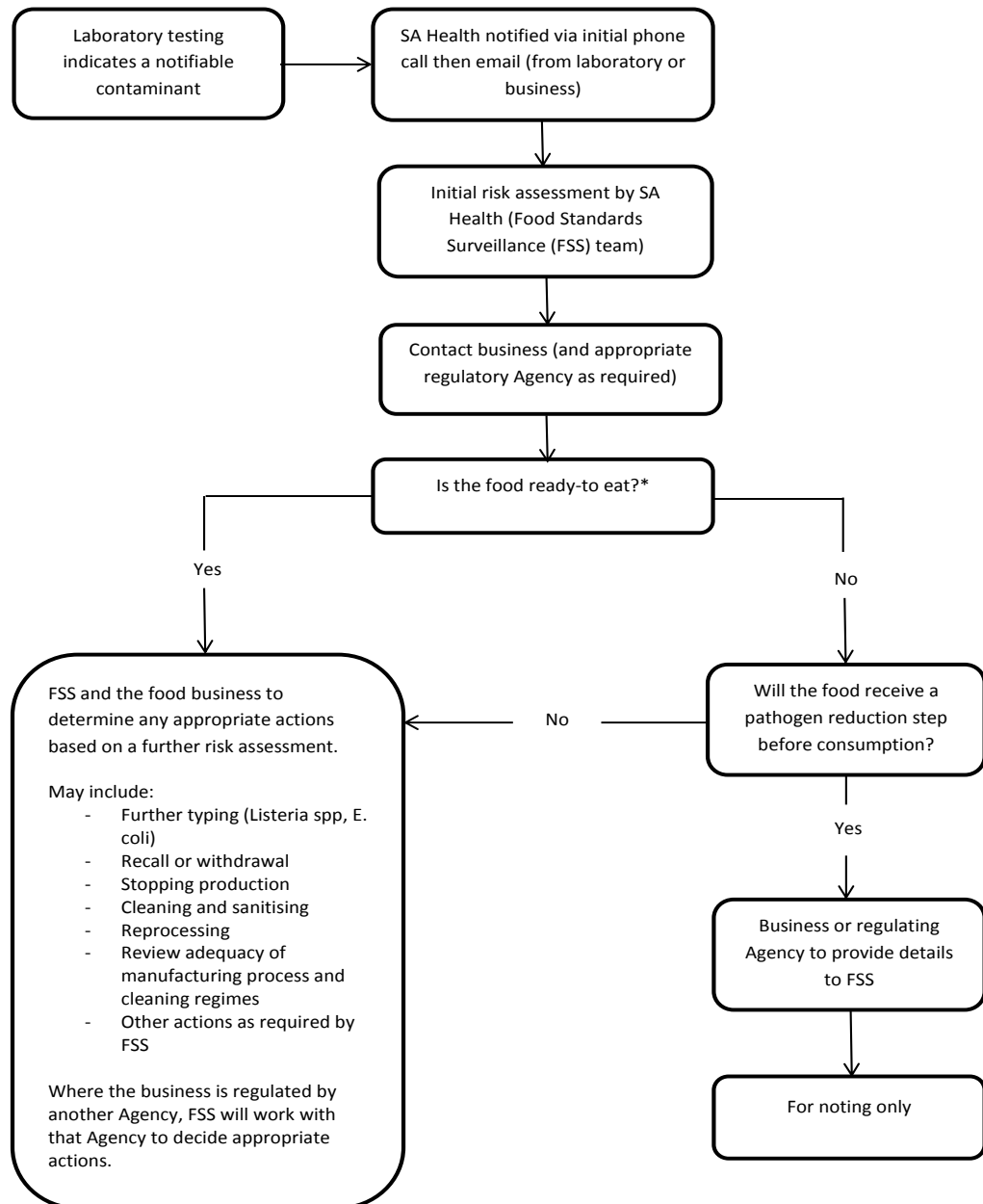
NOTE: any changes to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Schedule 27 or the Compendium of Microbiological Criteria for Food may result in changes to the notifiable contaminants either with regard to the defined contaminants or the limits of detection that require notification.

More information

Contact SA Health's [Food and Controlled Drugs Branch](#) via healthfood@sa.gov.au or 8226 7100

FIGURE 1 – NOTIFICATION PROCESS

This flowchart is guidance only. Each risk assessment and subsequent action will be conducted on a case by case basis that considers the particular contaminant, the limits specified in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code or the FSANZ Compendium of Microbiological Criteria for Food, and the public health risks.



* The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) defines ready-to-eat food as food that is ordinarily consumed in the same state as that in which it is sold and does not include nuts in the shell and whole, raw fruits and vegetables that are intended for hulling, peeling or washing by the consumer.

For more information

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www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/foodsafety



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