Food Safety Complaints – Foreign Objects / Durability Dates

The Environmental Health, Food and Health & Safety team receive a lot of complaints relating to food safety each year. However not all foreign objects are a health risk. Below are the most common complaints, together with the action you should take:

The Environmental Health team will generally, not investigate any foreign object/durability complaints other than those indicated as a possible public health risk, below.

**Vegetables and Fruit**

**Stones, soil and slugs:**

Fruits and vegetables frequently have stones, soil or small slugs on or in them. This is because they originate from the soil and is quite normal.

**No public health risk.**

Action: Wash thoroughly.

**Mould:**

Mould growth occurs naturally when fruit and vegetables are stored too long or become bruised and damaged. Ensure you check produce when buying.

**No public health risk.**

Action: Dispose of mouldy produce.

**Greenfly:**

Salad vegetables, especially lettuce, may have greenfly attached. They can be difficult to wash off but they are not harmful. In fact, they demonstrate that the salad is fresh. This will become an increasingly common problem as the use of pesticides decreases.

**No public health risk.**

Action: No action required

**Tinned Food**

**Wasps and Fruit Flies:**

Wasps and fruit flies are naturally associated with ripe fruit and do not carry disease. They are common in tins of fruit.

**No public health risk.**

Action: Contact retailer.

**Field Insects:**

Insects that are found naturally in fields are sometimes harvested up alongside fruit and vegetables. Food companies do take measures to remove these insects but, occasionally, some will slip through the net. However the insects and grubs will be killed and sterilised by the canning process. The frequency of finding these pests will increase as the use of pesticides decreases.

**No public health risk.**

Action: Contact retailer.
Mould:
Damaged, dented or incorrectly processed tins could allow mould growth to occur. This may indicate an error in production or storage.

Possible public health risk.
Action: Contact Environmental Health.

Dried Foods

Insects:
Products such as flour, sugar and pulses may get infested by insects such as beetles and weevils if the foods are stored for too long. They breed very quickly in warm, humid conditions and spread into uncontaminated food very quickly. These insects do not carry disease.

No public health risk.
Action: Dispose of all infected packages in an outside bin and vacuum clean the cupboards thoroughly, ensuring that you immediately dispose of the vacuum’s contents in an outside bin. Ensure new dried foods are stored in airtight containers in well ventilated storage areas.

Chocolate/Confectionery

Bloom:
If stored at too high a temperature chocolate can develop a light coloured bloom. It is not harmful and is not mould, it is simply due to fat separation.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer.

Crystals:
Large crystals may form in confectionery and are sometimes mistaken for glass. To check whether glass or crystals place in warm water and if they are crystals they will dissolve.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer.

Bakery Goods

Bakery Char:
Occasionally bread and cakes may contain bits of overcooked dough which has flaked off bakery tins. It is sometimes mistaken for rodent droppings, however it is not necessarily an indication of poor hygiene.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer.

Carbonised Grease:
Occasionally some bread or cake products have areas with a grey/greasy look. This is because the machinery used to produce them is lubricated with a non-toxic vegetable oil, which can sometimes become incorporated.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer
Fish

Glass-like crystals:
During the canning process naturally occurring elements, which are commonly found in fish, may develop into hard crystals which are called struvite. These crystals are often mistaken for glass fragments. They are not harmful if swallowed and will be broken down by the stomach acids. It is more common in tinned salmon. If you are unsure whether you have glass or struvite crystals in your fish simply place in vinegar and heat gently. Struvite crystals will dissolve, glass will not.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer if struvite, Environmental Health if glass.

Codworm:
These small, round brownish yellow worms are found in the flesh of white fish such as cod or haddock. The affected parts of the fish are usually cut away but some may be overlooked. However they are harmless to humans and are killed by the cooking process.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer.

Glowing Fish:
Some seafoods such as crabmeat, cooked shrimp, prawns and even simulated seafood products made from surimi glow due to the presence of luminous bacteria. When seafood glows it does not mean that it is unsafe or of low quality. There are no reports of illness from luminous marine bacteria growing on seafood. Refrigerate all seafood products to slow the growth of bacteria. Consume cooked seafood products within a day or two after purchase.

No public health risk.
Action: Contact retailer.

Best Before / Use by Dates

Best Before Dates:
The sale of foods, beyond the marked best before end date is not an offence, unless the food is found to be unfit to eat

No public health risk(unless food is not fit to eat)
Action: Contact retailer.

Use by Dates:
The sale of food beyond the marked use by date (usually chilled and perishable foods) is an offence.

Possible Public Health Risk
Action: Contact Derbyshire County Council Trading Standards (08456 058 058) who will investigate the complaint or Environmental Health who will transfer the complaint for you.