

Babergh Foodwise



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Scores on the doors!



Babergh District Council has notched up another first in Suffolk by launching its 5 Star Scores on the Doors rating system for food businesses.

From April 1 this year, Food Safety Officers at Babergh have been busy scoring businesses for their food hygiene at the same time as routine visits to the district's food premises. As well as making sure businesses are adhering to strict laws governing food preparation and sales, all premises are now given a certificate with a star rating.

Businesses don't have to display these certificates but members of the public can find out how well their favourite bar, restaurant or café scored by searching on the Babergh website.

Emma Richbell, Babergh's Senior Food and Safety Officer, said: "For many years food businesses have been rated for various safety issues using a complex national scoring system.

"Scores on the Doors takes elements of this rating process and combines them in a star rating for an 'at a glance' assessment of food safety. "Babergh is really proud of this scheme – it gives a win-win situation for everyone.

"Consumers will be able to tell whether their favourite restaurant or takeaway is complying with food safety requirements and businesses can be really proud to display their certificate.

"At the time of writing over 160 premises have been issued with a star rating certificate

"We have been very pleased to award a high number of four and five star certificates to businesses which are working hard to ensure that they provide safe food." ▶

Here are some commonly asked questions and answers about the scheme:

When will I get a certificate?

Following your next routine food hygiene inspection. Most premises are inspected every 18 months.

Do I have to display the certificate?

Display of the certificate is voluntary. However as the general public become more aware of the scheme, if they don't see a certificate they may ask why! All scores are uploaded monthly to the Babergh website for the public to view at www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/scores

How can I get five stars?

You need to do no more than ensure that your business complies with food safety legislation. This means that you must have a documented food safety management system (Safer Food Better Business for example) and be implementing it fully. It's not enough to have the paperwork completed; we need to see that the rules are being put into practice! In addition your premises must be in good repair and kept clean, and your staff must be trained and competent.

What if I get a low star rating?

As always, officers from the Food and Safety team will explain to you why you have been given a poor score and what you need to do to put things right.

And then I can get another certificate?

Well, no. Your star rating will not be revised until the next routine inspection. It's important to ensure that you operate your business to high standards of hygiene at all times, not to wait for the inspector to come and tell you what needs to be done. If you think you need some help to improve standards before your next routine inspection contact the Food and Safety team by email at food.safety@babergh.gov.uk or call 01473 825888 - we'd be happy to help.



But surely once I've put things right the star rating should be reviewed?

Our policy is not to do this as we feel it would not give the public a true picture of how well businesses are complying with the legislation. However you can apply to have a short statement displayed alongside your star rating on the website to explain the improvements you have made since the inspection was carried out.

What if I disagree with my star rating?

You should first contact the officer who carried out the inspection who will explain how the score was arrived at. If

you feel this is unfair you should write to the Food and Safety Regulation Manager within 28 days of the date on the certificate.

The Food and Safety Regulation Manager will investigate and decide whether a review is justified and if any further action is needed.

If you remain aggrieved after this process, a formal complaint should be made via the Council's standard complaints procedure.

■ For more information on Babergh's Scores on the Doors scheme contact us by email at food.safety@babergh.gov.uk or call 01473 825888, or visit our website at www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/scores

Pennington Inquiry into Welsh E coli outbreak



In March this year, Professor Hugh Pennington published his report following the enquiry into the outbreak of E coli O157 in South Wales in September 2005. The outbreak was the largest outbreak caused by E coli in Wales, and the second largest to date in the UK. A total of 157 cases were identified, most of those cases were children. Thirty-one people were admitted to hospital and tragically Mason Jones, five, died. E coli O157 is a particularly nasty organism. It is very infectious - just a few bacteria can cause a potentially fatal infection. Some people may suffer only a mild infection while others may be left with permanent kidney or brain damage. Those aged under 5 and over 75 are particularly vulnerable. They are more likely to develop complications such as kidney failure which are not preventable and for which there are no specific treatments, only good supportive care.

Source of the outbreak

The outbreak was caused by cooked meats which had been contaminated with E coli O157. The cooked meats had been produced by

John Tudor and Son, a catering butcher. Investigation of the outbreak showed that there had been inadequate separation of raw and cooked foods at Tudors and cleaning and disinfection were completely inadequate. The proprietor William Tudor had a cavalier attitude to food safety and was far more concerned about maximising his profits. Tudor pleaded guilty to seven food hygiene offences and was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

What should food businesses be doing about E coli O157?

The Wales E coli outbreak was on a huge scale and occurred in a premises supplying large volumes of food to schools, residential homes and similar premises. But outbreaks can occur in any premises that handles raw and ready-to-eat foods.

An E coli O157 outbreak occurred in Stowmarket in 2008 among customers of a late-night takeaway. On visiting the takeaway, Mid Suffolk District Council officers found poor separation of raw and ready-to-eat foods, in particular raw burgers defrosting above prepared lettuce in a refrigerator.

Although E coli O157 is a deadly disease, some very simple measures will prevent it:

- Raw foods should always be stored separately from foods which are ready-to-eat. If they are in the same 'fridge, raw foods should be stored at the bottom where they cannot drip onto other foods. Be careful if your salad box is at the bottom of the fridge.
- Ideally, raw foods and ready-to-eat foods should be handled in different areas. Where this is not possible cleaning and disinfection of work surfaces must be carried out after handling raw foods and before handling ready-to-eat foods.
- Wherever possible, separate equipment and utensils should be used for raw and ready-to-eat foods. Where this is not practical then careful cleaning and disinfection between tasks is vital, as E coli O157 can survive on some surfaces for over 60 days.
- Food handlers must wash their hands thoroughly between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Foods which can support the growth of bacteria should never be left at room temperature for longer than necessary.

For more information about Professor Pennington's Inquiry and E coli O157 contact food.safety@babergh.gov.uk or visit the Food Standards Agency's website at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2009/mar/ecoliwales>

Guidance on the Food Safety Act 1990

Legislation can often be hard to understand so it's always useful when you can get your hands on a good summary in plain English.

To this end the Food Standards Agency has recently published The Food Safety Act 1990: a Guide for Food Businesses.

The Food Safety Act covers matters such as the legal definition of 'food', offences, the 'due diligence defence' and how the Act is enforced.

You can download a copy of the guidance at www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsactguide.pdf

You should note that the detailed requirements for food businesses such as structural standards and the need to produce a food safety management system are contained in separate regulations - see www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/hyg-guid/fhlguidance/

Salmonella in eggs - it hasn't gone away!

The directors of a Monmouth hotel have been fined £40,000 and ordered to pay £5,500 costs for supplying food contaminated with Salmonella in April 2008. Seventeen people, including two children, were made ill.

The directors appeared in court in March 2009. The court heard that the outbreak was traced to the use of raw shell eggs in a range of uncooked foods including mayonnaise, ice cream, hollandaise sauce and a kiwi parfait dessert. In preparing the food the business had not followed its own documented food safety procedures.

Closer to home, Food and Safety Officers often find that Babergh business are confused about whether 'Lion-marked' eggs are Salmonella-free, or what they should be using in dishes which will not be cooked and include raw eggs. The important thing to remember is that all raw shell eggs are potentially contaminated with Salmonella bacteria, even if they are Lion-marked.

This is not a problem if the eggs or dishes containing eggs are going to be thoroughly cooked, as Salmonella is easily killed by cooking. But if you intend to prepare a dish with raw eggs that is not going to be cooked, the only safe way is to use pasteurised egg.

Pasteurised egg is available as whole liquid egg or white and yolk separately and is guaranteed to be free of Salmonella so is completely safe to use. If you are preparing food for vulnerable groups such as the very young or elderly it is good practice to use pasteurised egg in lightly cooked dishes too, such as scrambled egg or omelettes.



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