

Title: Egg handling and hygiene practices	Date: 09/10/2017
	Ref: ENF/E/17/062
For information and Action: Local authorities are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that they are aware of the updated FSA advice to catering establishments • make FBOs in their area aware of the FSA advice on good egg handling and hygiene practices during scheduled interventions 	Category: Food Hygiene
Distribution to: All local authorities in England Trading Standards Environmental Health teams Port Health Officers	Notification type: For Information /Action

Please bring this letter to the attention of all relevant officers in your Authority and all catering establishments who handle eggs at the next scheduled intervention

Dear Colleague,

I would like to draw your attention to the updated FSA advice on the consumption of eggs which are served raw or lightly cooked and how this might affect food business operators (FBOs) in your area.

FSA advice on the consumption of eggs

An expert group, set up by the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF), to look at egg safety, found there has been a reduction in the risk from *Salmonella* in UK hen shell eggs since its last report on this issue 15 years ago, particularly from eggs which are produced under the control measures which are required under the British Lion Code of Practice¹.

The ACMSF report, *An update on the microbiological risk from shell eggs and their products*², was finalised in June 2016, and consequently the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) have reviewed their consumer advice, taking into account the ACMSF's conclusions and recommendations.

¹ <https://www.egginfo.co.uk/british-lion-eggs/about/british-lion-code-practice>

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/acmsf-egg-reportv1.pdf>

The Group concluded that the risk level for UK hen shell eggs produced under the Lion Code, or produced under demonstrably-equivalent comprehensive quality assurance schemes, should be considered as 'very low', whilst for all other UK hen shell eggs, the risk level should be considered 'low'

In practical terms, ACMSF considered that Lion Coded eggs³ are considered to be safe to serve raw or lightly cooked to individuals who may be more vulnerable to infection, including pregnant women, young children and elderly people. This represents a change to current advice which recommends that these groups should not consume any eggs raw or lightly cooked.

FSA and FSS have now amended consumer advice in line with ACMSF recommendations, following a public consultation. Consumer advice on egg consumption will now be presented as follows:

- Eggs which are thoroughly cooked and handled hygienically should not present a food safety risk;
- Consumers who are in good health (i.e. those who are not vulnerable to infection) can continue to eat raw or soft-boiled UK hen eggs or foods containing lightly cooked UK hen eggs;
- Consumers who may be more vulnerable to infection (pregnant women, young children and elderly people) can eat raw or soft boiled hen eggs or foods containing lightly cooked hen eggs provided that they are produced under the Lion Code or a demonstrably-equivalent comprehensive quality assurance scheme³(Revised advice Annex A);
- It should be noted that this advice does not extend to individuals who are severely immunocompromised requiring medically supervised diets prescribed by health professionals;
- The existing advice on non-hen shell eggs (e.g. duck, goose and quail eggs) - that they should not be consumed raw or lightly cooked - has not changed.

The ACMSF report also highlighted the increased uncertainty associated with the risk assessment of the safety for all eggs used in catering establishments, because of the larger number of eggs used, and catering practices such as pooling and storage of pooled eggs (including at ambient temperature) where there may be an increased risk of cross-contamination and multiplication of *Salmonella*.

The FSA and FSS would therefore like local authorities (LAs) to ensure that FBOs who use eggs are aware of the updated advice to consumers on the use of raw and lightly cooked eggs and also to remind FBOs of the advice on the safe handling of eggs (see Annex B). LAs should take the opportunity to discuss this with FBOs in their area at the next scheduled intervention.

If you have any comments or questions please send them to:

³ This advice could also apply to schemes demonstrably equivalent to the Lion Code, but these are still being assessed. This advice will be updated if other schemes demonstrate equivalence.

foodhygiene.policy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

Narriman Looch

Annex A

Revised advice to consumers (including vulnerable groups) on eating lightly cooked or raw UK hen shell eggs and their products in the home

The presence of *Salmonella* in UK hen shell eggs has been reduced greatly in recent years, and evidence shows that the risks are particularly low for eggs which have been produced according to food safety controls applied by the British Lion Code of Practice. This has allowed FSA and FSS to amend advice for consumers on the consumption of raw and lightly cooked eggs.

People who are in good health

People who are in good health (i.e. who are not vulnerable to infection) are unlikely to experience food poisoning through the consumption of raw or lightly cooked UK hen eggs which are produced from *Salmonella*-vaccinated flocks. Healthy individuals should therefore continue to enjoy dishes such as soft boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise which are prepared using UK produced hen shell eggs which are sourced from vaccinated flocks via reputable suppliers.

Vulnerable Groups⁴

People who are more vulnerable to infection or who are likely to suffer more serious symptoms from food poisoning such as young children, pregnant women, and elderly people can eat raw hen eggs or foods containing lightly cooked hen eggs (such as soft boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise), provided that the eggs are produced under the Lion Code⁵. If the eggs are not Lion Code (see lion logo below) or produced under an equivalent comprehensive quality control scheme, or if in doubt, people who may be more vulnerable to infection are advised to eat thoroughly cooked eggs.



General Advice

When eating raw or lightly cooked eggs, also bear in mind the importance of:

- storing eggs safely in a cool, dry place such as the refrigerator;
- following good hygiene practices in the kitchen; avoiding cross contamination, cleaning all work surfaces, dishes and utensils and making sure you wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling eggs;
- observing best-before dates;
- avoiding eggs with damaged shells, as these may allow dirt or bacteria to get inside.

Non-hen eggs

Non-hen eggs such as duck, goose and quail eggs should always be cooked thoroughly.

Further information on the microbiological risk from shell eggs and their products can be found at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/acmsf-egg-reportv1.pdf>

⁴ This recommendation does not extend to individuals who are severely immunocompromised and require medically supervised diets prescribed by health professionals.

⁵ This advice could also apply to schemes demonstrably-equivalent to the Lion Code, but these are still being assessed. This advice will be updated if other schemes demonstrate equivalence.

Annex B

Advice to catering establishments on good egg handling and hygiene practices

Some eggs can contain *Salmonella* bacteria inside or on their shells, so it's important to be careful how you handle them and how you use them. This is because *Salmonella* can cause very serious illness, especially among people who are vulnerable to infection (such as pregnant women, young children and elderly people). In severe cases, *Salmonella* food poisoning can cause death.

Sourcing eggs

Caterers should always buy eggs from reputable suppliers which are able to demonstrate the traceability and provenance of their supply.

Due to the risk of *Salmonella*, it is best practice to purchase UK eggs and source them from a reputable supplier which uses eggs from flocks that are part of a scheme which vaccinates chickens with an effective anti-*Salmonella* vaccination programme. This reduces the chance that eggs will have *Salmonella* inside or on the shells.

If you are going to prepare foods that contain raw or lightly cooked eggs (such as soft boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise), and are likely to be serving individuals who may be vulnerable to infection, you should use eggs that have been produced under the Lion Code⁶

If you are unable to verify that your egg supply is sourced from vaccinated flocks and has been produced under the Lion Code or a demonstrably-equivalent comprehensive scheme, you should ensure all of your egg dishes are thoroughly cooked or produced using pasteurised egg.

Can I be sure that an egg is *Salmonella*-free?

There has been a major reduction in the microbiological risk from *Salmonella* in UK hen shell eggs, and this is especially the case for eggs produced under the Lion Code Quality Assurance Scheme. It should be noted that the risk from non-UK eggs has not been reduced to the same extent.

Although eggs produced from UK vaccinated flocks present a lower risk, it is not possible to guarantee that any egg will be free from *Salmonella*, whatever the source or brand. So you still need to be careful how you handle all eggs. Remember it's always better to source your eggs from a reputable supplier.

The FSA is reminding caterers of the following good egg hygiene and handling practices:

- Store eggs in a cool, dry place, ideally in the fridge, and clean the storage area regularly;
- Keep eggs away from other foods, when they are still in the shell and when you have cracked them open;
- Don't use damaged or dirty eggs;
- Be careful not to splash raw egg onto other foods, surfaces or dishes;
- If you are breaking eggs to use later (sometimes called 'pooling') keep the liquid egg in the fridge and take out small amounts as needed;
- Use all 'pooled' liquid egg on the same day and don't add new eggs to top it up;

⁶ This advice could also apply to schemes demonstrably-equivalent to the Lion Code, but these are still being assessed. This advice will be updated if other schemes demonstrate equivalence.

- Use pasteurised or Lion Code eggs for raw or lightly cooked eggs
- Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after touching eggs or working with them;
- Clean food areas, dishes and utensils thoroughly and regularly, using warm soapy water, after working with eggs
- Serve egg dishes straight away, or cool them quickly and keep chilled

Ideally, you should do all your work with raw eggs at one time. Remember that drips of egg and broken shells could spread bacteria. So you should dispose of the shells carefully, and thoroughly clean surfaces, sinks, dishes and utensils before starting a different type of work. All staff should wash their hands with warm water and soap, and dry them thoroughly, before and after working with eggs.

Duck/Goose/Quail eggs

Non-hen eggs carry a higher risk of *Salmonella* and should not be used to prepare raw or lightly cooked egg dishes. Eggs from species other than chickens should always be cooked thoroughly.

Raw and lightly cooked hen eggs

Caterers should always consider the potential health status of the individuals they will be preparing egg dishes for, and need to take extra care when preparing and serving raw eggs, soft boiled eggs and any foods that are prepared using raw or lightly cooked eggs such as soft boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise. This is particularly important for those who are catering specifically for individuals who may be more vulnerable to infection (such as infants, young children, pregnant women, elderly people and those who are unwell).

If you are serving raw eggs or lightly cooked egg dishes to the general public, it is important to use UK hen eggs and to always ensure these are sourced from a reputable supplier who is able to demonstrate the traceability and provenance of their supply. Safe handling and hygiene practices as detailed above are of particular importance.

If you are a caterer which is likely to be serving raw eggs, eggs with runny yolks or any food that contains raw or less than thoroughly cooked eggs to people who might be more vulnerable to infection you should use eggs produced under the Lion Code. If you are unable to verify that your egg supply is sourced from vaccinated flocks and has been produced under the Lion Code, you should ensure all of your egg dishes are thoroughly cooked or prepared using pasteurised egg.

It is important to note that the new advice does not apply to meals intended for individuals who are severely immunocompromised and require medically supervised diets. Medical advice should always be sought when preparing food for these individuals.