

Gloucester City Council

Factsheet

CONSUMER COMPLAINTS ABOUT FOOD PRODUCTS

Thank you for informing Environmental Health of an unsatisfactory purchase of food. This note is to explain the action that we may be able to take and factors which will be taken into consideration.

Complaints about food are quite uncommon; we receive about 150 complaints each year concerning 'foreign matter' in food, insects, mould, food which is 'off' and alleged illness.

Of course, some complaints are made directly to retailers and manufacturers with no involvement from Environmental Health Officers. Complaints about the quality of food, chemical contamination & improper use of additives, composition of food, and food labelling are dealt with by Gloucestershire County Council's Trading Standards Officers, telephone 08454 040506.

In some cases it is more appropriate for a customer to contact the retailer or manufacturer and we can advise on this.

Under the Regulation (EC) 178/2002 it is an offence to sell food which is unfit for human consumption (contaminated, putrefied, deteriorated or decayed) or is injurious to health. Many food suppliers have set up procedures to ensure, as far as possible, that such problems do not occur.

Our first concern is to ensure that your complaint does not indicate that other food may be on sale which is injurious to health and then to check whether the manufacturer, distributors and retailer have taken reasonable precautions to prevent the occurrence. Contact is made with Environmental Health Officer colleagues responsible for the premises concerned when food originates outside our area; their advice is often sought about the record of the food manufacturer and the need for remedial or enforcement action if necessary.

These investigations may take some time but we always endeavour to keep complainants informed of the progress of a case and consult them over its resolution.

Most of the complaints investigated are isolated incidents; very few reveal a recurring problem. In most cases we try to resolve the complaint informally and, with consent, put the manufacturer or retailer in touch with the complainant.

The Environmental Health Service cannot undertake negotiations on a complainant's behalf in respect of recompense or compensation.

Government guidelines may, in certain cases, indicate that prosecution should be taken. If that is necessary the purchaser and the finder of the problem will be asked to make signed statements about the circumstances of the complaint and will also have to be prepared to repeat that evidence in court.

If you need further advice or information about the investigation of your complaint please do not hesitate to contact the Officer dealing with the case.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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