

## Public Advisory Note 1 Foreign Objects in Food

Here are some common food complaints together with a short explanation and suggestions for the suitable course of action should you find one.

Discovering a foreign object in food is a very unpleasant experience, but may not necessarily pose a serious health risk.

It is important that officer time is spent dealing with food complaints where there is a risk to the health of the public such as:-

- a) Food which is unfit for human consumption
- b) Food which contains a foreign object which poses a serious health risk e.g. glass or metal

Please note that whichever course of action you follow this Directorate cannot become involved in negotiations for compensation.

### Tinned Food

#### **Wasps & Fruit Flies (No public health risk)**

Are also common in tins of fruit. These are naturally associated with ripe fruit and do not carry disease.

**Action:** *Contact Manufacturer*

#### **Struvite (No public health risk)**

Certain naturally occurring elements in fish may develop into hard crystals during the canning process. These crystals may be mistaken for glass fragments and are called Struvite. It is not harmful and will be broken down by stomach acids if swallowed. It is especially common in tinned salmon. Struvite crystal will be dissolved if placed in vinegar and gently heated, glass will not.

**Action:** *Heat in vinegar. Contact Manufacturer if Struvite, Environmental Services Directorate if glass.*

#### **Mould (Possible public health risk)**

Dented, damaged or incorrectly processed tins may allow mould growth to occur. This could indicate an error in production or storage.

**Action:** *Contact Environmental Services Directorate*

### Fish

#### **Codworm (No public health risk)**

White fish such as Cod or Haddock may be infested with a small, round brownish yellow

worm. These are found in the flesh. They are killed by cooking and are harmless to humans. The affected parts of the fish are usually cut away, but some may be over looked.

**Action:** *Contact Retailer/Manufacturer*

## **Meat and Poultry**

### **Skin, Bone etc. (No public health risk)**

Products made from meat and/or poultry may contain small bones, skin or parts of blood vessels. These are unsightly but rarely a health hazard as they are normal parts of the original animal. Any personal inconvenience, e.g. chipped tooth, is best dealt with by the individual, via the civil courts if necessary.

**Action:** *Contact Retailer/Manufacturer*

Meat that has been kept at room temperature or kept too long will begin to rot & produce a very distinct odour. This may indicate an error in stock rotation and storage.

**Action:** *Contact Environmental Services Directorate*

**Note: it is very rare for prohibited parts of an animal (e.g. uro-genital organs, eyes, eye-lids etc) OR non-food species (e.g. cats, dogs etc) to be used for human food. Meat such as chicken or lamb is easily available and so inexpensive, that it make the use of prohibited parts/species uneconomic.**

## **Fruit and Vegetables**

### **Stones, Soil and Slugs (No public health risk)**

Fruit and vegetables commonly have soil, stones or small slugs adhering to them. This is quite normal as they originate in the soil.

**Action:** *Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly*

### **Greenfly (No public health risk)**

Salad vegetables, especially lettuce, may have greenfly attached. This is becoming increasingly common as the use of pesticides decreases. Greenfly are difficult to wash off but they are often not harmful – in fact they indicate that the salad is fresh.

**Action:** *Do nothing*

**Note: Mould growth will naturally occur when fruit and vegetables become bruised and damaged. This will be minimised if the buyer checks the product before purchase and handles carefully afterwards.**

## **Bakery Goods**

### **Bakery Char (No public health risk)**

Bread and cakes may contain bits of overcooked dough which has flaked off bakery tins and it is not necessary an indicator of poor hygiene. It may be mistaken for rodent droppings that are black and regular torpedo shape whereas bakery char is greyish and comes in uneven

shapes.

**Action:** *Contact Retailer*

**Carbonised Grease  
(No public health risk)**

The machinery used to produce bread and cakes is lubricated with a non-toxic vegetable oil. Occasionally some may become incorporated into the dough giving areas of the product a grey/greasy appearance.

**Action:** *Contact Retailer*

**Dried Foods**

**Insects**

**(No public health risk)**

Dried products such as flour, sugar and pulses may contain small insects such as psocids (book lice). These do not carry disease but they eat through the paper of the packet. They breed very quickly in warm, dark humid conditions and spread into uncontaminated food very quickly.

**Action:** *Throw out all affected food. Clean cupboards with bleach solution and dry thoroughly. Store new, dried goods in airtight containers. Ensure good ventilation in kitchen*

**Chocolate/Confectionery**

**Bloom**

**(No public health risk)**

Chocolate may develop a light coloured bloom if stored at too high temperature. It is not mould but is due to fat separation. It is not harmful.

**Action:** *Return to Retailer*

**Crystals (No public health risk)**

Large sugar crystals may form in confectionery and may be mistaken for glass. The crystals will dissolve in warm water.

**Action:** *Test with warm water. Notify Environmental Services if it does not dissolve*

If you decide you want this Directorate to investigate you should:-

- ❖ Keep the food, any wrapping and receipt safe
- ❖ Avoid handling the foreign objects
- ❖ Kept perishable food in the fridge or freezer

**For further Advice/Information contact  
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