

food or its ingredients. Once the analysis is complete the sample is classified by the laboratory as 'satisfactory', 'acceptable', 'unsatisfactory' or 'unacceptable,

potentially hazardous' (See table below). If a sample of food is taken from your premises, you will receive a letter and a copy of the laboratory report within around

two weeks of the sample being taken. The table below explains the different results categories which are assigned to each sample by the laboratory.

Satisfactory	Low levels of bacteria. No pathogens (potentially harmful bacteria) present.	Test results indicating good microbiological quality.
Acceptable	Moderate levels of bacteria. Very low levels of some pathogens.	Test results indicating a borderline limit of microbiological quality.
Unsatisfactory	High levels of bacteria. Low to moderate levels of some pathogens.	Test results indicating that further sampling may be necessary, and that officers may wish to undertake a further inspection of the premises concerned to determine whether hygiene practice for food production or handling are adequate or not.
Unacceptable/ potentially hazardous	Presence of food poisoning bacteria of particular concern and/or high levels of other pathogens.	Test results indicating that urgent attention is needed to locate the source of the problem. Such results may form a basis for prosecution by environmental health departments, especially if they occur in more than one sample.

Between January and June of this year 129 samples of food were taken from premises in the Babergh District, ranging from



sandwiches, ice cream and

cooked sliced meats for the local monitoring programme to butter and raw meats for national surveys (the food sampling programme for the year can be viewed on the Babergh website www.babergh.gov.uk). Of these samples only 6 were classified by the laboratory as 'unsatisfactory' and 9 as 'acceptable'. Our first response to an acceptable or unsatisfactory result is to take a re-sample of the product. If this is satisfactory no further action is taken. However if there are still problems an officer may visit the premises to try and determine what has caused the problem. Common causes of less than satisfactory results are inadequate cleaning and/or disinfection, and poor temperature control. In any case, Babergh officers will work with businesses to attempt to



identify possible causes of any poor samples.

Hopefully this has given you a bit more of an idea about food sampling and why we do it, but if you would like to know more email foodwise@babergh.gov.uk.