

# FoodWise

BABERGH'S FOOD SAFETY & HYGIENE NEWSLETTER ISSUE 8

## Important News For Food Business Operators

**WE ARE CURRENTLY happy to help and advise businesses on implementing their documented food safety management system (be it Safer Food Better Business or an alternative approach) and give a suitable period for compliance.**

This advice is generally being given at the first food hygiene inspection you receive after 1/1/06. However, all food businesses operators should be aware that this is a legal requirement and the time will come when we will no longer be able to assist but will have to enforce! So don't delay – make sure that you are making satisfactory progress towards compliance now!

### You must:

- Make sure you know what is required – all food businesses must prepare a documented food safety management system. If you need help call the Food and Safety Team on 01473 825890 or seek assistance from a food safety consultant.
- Make sure you have arrangements in place to address the fundamentals of food safety such as cleaning, maintenance of buildings and equipment, pest control and staff training. If you use SFBB, these are included in the pack.



### SFBB Update

**IN CASE YOU missed the STOP PRESS notice that went out with the last issue of FoodWise, the Retail version of the SFBB pack is now available.**

The pack is for small retail businesses that sell food, including any food that needs to be kept cold to keep it safe, such as cooked meats. These include small convenience stores, 'corner shops' and confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents. The pack also contains a 'cooking and preparation supplement' to cover some of the common activities carried out in retail premises such as sandwich preparation,

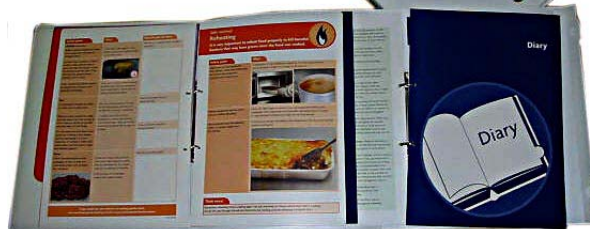
bake-off of meat products and rotisserie chicken.

To obtain your copy call the Food Standards Agency on 0845 606 0667 or email [foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com](mailto:foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com)

Supplements for Chinese and Indian cuisine are expected to be available from early 2007. We will contact all businesses who may be interested in obtaining these as soon as we hear that they are available.

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- Prepare documentation which identifies the food safety hazards, control measures, monitoring procedures and corrective actions should things go wrong. We are recommending that caterers and retailers use the SFBB packs, but if you wish to use an alternative system which covers these requirements, that's fine.
- Train your staff in the procedures! It doesn't matter how good your food safety management system is if staff don't know what it says!
- Keep records of your monitoring procedures. If you use SFBB, this means completing the Diary. For other systems this might include keeping records of temperature monitoring and cleaning for example.
- Review the food safety management system from time to time. If you change the way you operate you may need to update the documentation to reflect this.



**If you haven't started to prepare your documented food safety management system yet, you need to start NOW. We expect all businesses to be either almost or fully compliant with this requirement by the time of their second routine inspection after 1/1/06. If little or no progress has been made we will be serving Hygiene Improvement Notices to secure compliance.**

## Firth's Focus



Malcolm Firth  
Head of the  
Natural  
& Built  
Environment

What do you think is the most common cause of infectious gastroenteritis (upset stomach) in the UK? *Campylobacter*? *Salmonella*? In fact viral gastroenteritis is estimated to affect between 600,000 and a million people each year in the UK, compared to around 40-50,000 cases of *Campylobacter* and only 10-20,000 cases of *Salmonella*.

The most common cause of viral gastroenteritis is the Norovirus group of viruses. The bug may be better known as Winter Vomiting Disease (named for its most common symptom and tendency to be more common during the winter months). You've probably heard of some of the outbreaks – cruise ships and hospitals are commonly affected.

The graph (right) shows how Norovirus has been on the increase in recent years.

Malcolm Firth

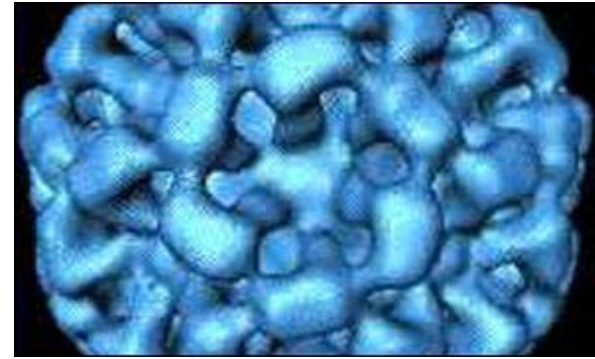
# NOROVIRUS

## Suffolk's most common cause of Infectious Gastroenteritis

### How does Norovirus spread?

The virus is very easily spread from person to person – by direct contact with an infected person, by consuming food or water which has become contaminated or via contaminated surfaces or objects. The virus can even be airborne, so if you are in the same room as an ill person or enter an area where an infected person has been sick you can pick up the infection.

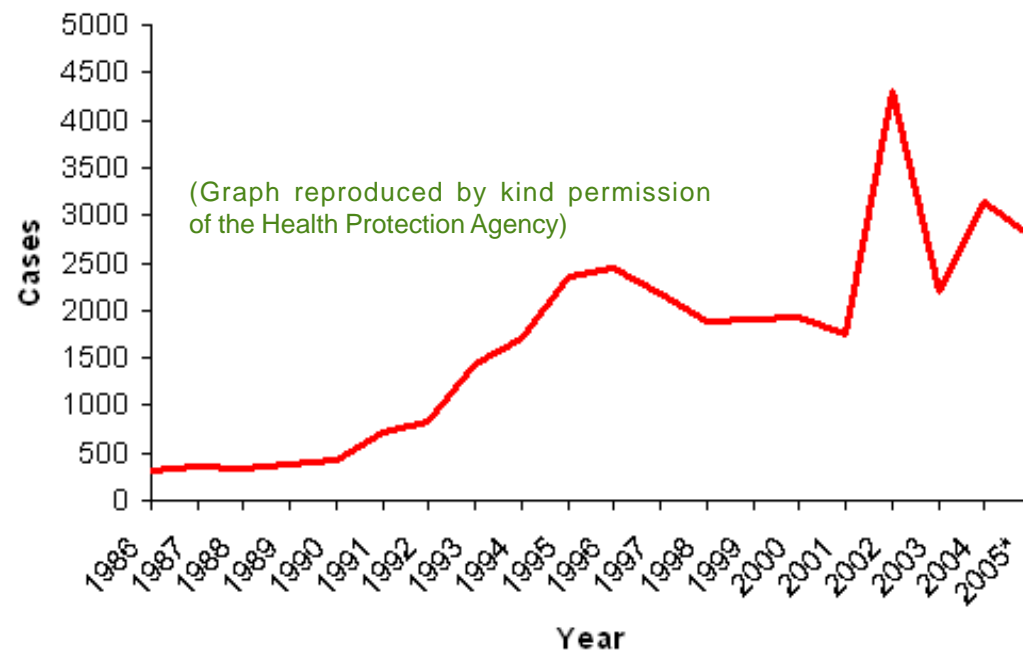
Unfortunately any immunity to Norovirus is very short-lived and this combined with the highly infectious nature of the virus means that during outbreaks an infection rate of more than 50% of susceptible people is common. This is a much higher 'attack rate' than you would expect in outbreaks of bacterial food poisoning such as *Salmonella*.



Electron Micrograph of a Norovirus

### Why should food business operators be concerned?

Well, it depends on the nature of your business. But if you handle any open foods which will be consumed without cooking you need to be aware of the risk and make sure the foods are protected from contamination. The classic example is self-service salad bars in



### What are the symptoms of Norovirus infection?

Symptoms typically begin around 12-48 hours after a person has become infected. There is generally a sudden onset of nausea (feeling sick) followed by vomiting and diarrhoea. (A characteristic of the vomiting is its 'projectile' nature which tends to help the virus to spread more effectively!) Some people will experience a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs.

both restaurants and retail premises. If a person who is infected with norovirus helps themselves to some food from the salad bar there is a good chance that they could contaminate the food – perhaps because they haven't washed their hands or possibly even from breathing on it. And then the virus just sits on the food waiting for the next unsuspecting person to come along and eat it. It doesn't matter how well chilled the food is because the virus doesn't grow on the food anyway, and in fact it doesn't need to – very low numbers of virus can make you ill.

### Is Norovirus really a problem around here?

Definitely. When Environmental Health staff become involved in outbreaks it seems more and more common for the outbreak to be confirmed, or highly suspected, to be viral in nature. See the box for details of two outbreaks which have occurred in Suffolk where the Environmental Health department became involved. During 2005 the Suffolk Health Protection Unit recorded 13 outbreaks of Norovirus, 11 of which were in residential and nursing homes.

### What can I do to reduce the risk of a Norovirus outbreak?

If customers can help themselves to open foods on your premises you should ensure that this is monitored and if you observe anything that gives you cause for concern – for example direct handling, tasting foods with utensils which are returned to the container or coughing/sneezing over foods – the food should be removed.

Any staff who have vomiting or diarrhoea must be excluded from the premises and not return to work until they have been free of symptoms for at least 48 hours.

If you are unlucky enough to have a member of staff or a customer actually be sick on the premises it must be cleaned up immediately using a bleach-based disinfectant (it is important to remember that anti-bacterial chemicals have no effect on viruses). The person who does the cleaning should wear protective clothing including face protection to limit their risk of infection.

If you have customer toilets, these should be separate from those used by staff, if possible.

Food handlers should always wash their hands after visiting the toilet and regularly through the day using liquid soap and running water. Paper towels are best for drying hands as the action of rubbing the hands can help to remove virus, and they can only be used once.

Food handlers should not eat or drink in food preparation areas.

For more information about Norovirus visit the Health Protection Agency's website at [www.hpa.org.uk/infections](http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections) and find Norovirus on the A-Z list or call FoodWise on 01473 852890 or email [food.safety@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@babergh.gov.uk).

#### Case study 1

##### Outbreak at Suffolk Pub August 2004

27 people who had either eaten or worked at the pub during an 8 day period began suffering with vomiting and/or diarrhoea. Information collected from the cases showed that a number of those who had been ill had consumed crab claws which had been served cold. However many of the others had simply been on the premises. One of the investigating Environmental Health Officers became ill despite the fact that he did not eat or drink anything from the premises or even use the toilets. The virus was isolated from 4 of the 14 faecal samples sent for analysis. The proprietor was given advice on cleaning, particularly of the toilets, and also advice on good hygiene practice and exclusion of unwell staff.

#### Case study 2

##### School Leavers' Prom at Suffolk Hotel June 2005

Around 90 pupils and 10 teachers attended an end of term prom. At least 20 of those became ill, mainly 24-36 hours after the function. Hotel staff reported that an unknown individual had been sick by the main entrance on the night of the prom. Crucially for the hotel evidence of how the food for the prom had been prepared (in particular records of cooking temperatures), together with good levels of hygiene training amongst kitchen staff was strongly suggestive that the food was *not* responsible. At least one of the pupils became ill very shortly after the event – assuming that their illness was viral they would have been highly infectious during the evening. Faecal samples from two of the cases subsequently tested positive for Norovirus.

# Chefs, Cooks and Bartenders are you Itching to Work with Fruit and Veg?

ARE YOU AWARE that certain fruit and vegetables you may handle at work are known to cause skin disorders such as dermatitis (itching, rashes, blistering)?

## The main culprits:

Celery

Parsnips

Pimentos and chillies

Limes

and other citrus fruit

Potatoes (handled wet)

Fresh pineapple

Skin problems can also occur with frequent contact with water (eg more than two hours a day), and with cleaning chemicals. Make sure you follow the safety instructions on cleaning products and wear the right protective clothing.

## What else can you do:

**REDUCE** – reduce the time handling the product, eg can you buy it in preprepared - make sure you dry your hands thoroughly after washing.

**PROTECT** – use single use protective gloves, nitrile gloves are ideal - if you must use latex then only use 'low protein, powder free' gloves



-use skin creams to replace skin oils after hand washing, and before/after work.

**CHECK** – check your skin regularly for dryness or soreness and tell your supervisor if these symptoms appear. If dermatitis (rashes, itching, skin cracking and peeling) appear seek medical advice and remember to tell the doctor that work could be the cause.

## Would You Like To Receive FoodWise By email?

WE ARE LOOKING to build up a database of food business email addresses so that FoodWise can be sent electronically. This would save paper and postage, and may also allow you to distribute FoodWise more easily throughout your organisation. If you would like to be entered onto the database send your email address to [food.safety@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@babergh.gov.uk)



If occupational dermatitis is spotted early and adequate precautions are taken, most people will make a full recovery. But some people can be affected for life.

## More information:

Preventing Dermatitis at Work, INDG 223, HSE Books  
Skin at Work website: [www.hse.gov.uk/skin](http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin)  
Health and safety advice is also available from:- HSE Infoline 08701 545500 or e-mail [hseinformationservices@natbrit.com](mailto:hseinformationservices@natbrit.com)  
Workplace Health Connect 0845 609 6006  
Food and Safety Team, Babergh District Council - 01473 825890, [safetyadvice@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:safetyadvice@babergh.gov.uk)

## SFBB

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In Issue 7 we told you that the Suffolk Food Liaison Group were successful in securing £90,000 of funding from the Food Standards Agency to help businesses in the county to implement SFBB.

Now that the initial seminars are complete we are concentrating on organising free workshops to offer more detailed advice where it is needed. The workshops, which are lead by independent consultants, offer an opportunity for food business operators to receive more detailed guidance on how to implement SFBB in their business. The standard workshops are now full but we are hoping to organise some for ethnic businesses. If you are interested in attending an ethnic businesses workshop call 01473 825890 or email us at [food.safety@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@babergh.gov.uk).