



Food Safety



Author
Gavin Bucket

Contractors

Pest control, cleaning, training, maintenance and distribution are some of the many services that the food industry out sources to external contractors. Many operators assume that by outsourcing these services, excludes them of the responsibility, however this is not the case. Yes the contractor is responsible for undertaking the services and you may have a contract or agreement in place detailing what is undertaken, however are you actually checking up on the services that they provide?

One client of mine thought that by having a pest controller meant that they didn't have to worry, however every time that their clients audited them, the issues raised always related to pest control. It may be that the reports hadn't been completed correctly, inspections had been missed, the licenses had expired or the bait maps were inaccurate. After an investigation, it was found that their pest controller had invoiced them, however had not actually undertaken some of the inspections. When queried, they faxed through a report that was clearly prepared after the alleged date. On another day, they were onsite for only 15 minutes and claimed to individually inspect, replace and report on 58 internal and external rodent and insect stations.

Another client of mine, had a pest controller that refused to provide MSDS for the chemicals that they were using, had no plan as to where the baits were laid and had employees that were not licensed as was required by the state legislation.

Once we identified these problems, and requested detailed reports and supporting documentation, the pest controller decided to withdraw their service, as they did not like being checked up on. This was a contractor who had been providing a "service" and charging for this "service" for more than 10 years.

Unfortunately this practice is all too common.

If you "employ" the services of a contractor, you must check up on the work that they are doing and not just expect them to do it. While we have developed HACCP, AQIS or ISO systems and these checks form part of their food quality management systems, it is important that you have some sort of controls in place for these contractors. Some simple measures that you may implement can include:

- Having a sign off form of your own that your contractors complete while they are at your facility (i.e. a cleaning schedule sign off form)
- Have a signed contract or agreement on the services and responsibilities that will be provided by the contractor
- Verify the points of the agreement that you have with a checklist of your own (and check if all of the points have been completed each time they visit)
- Have a close out form, that you go through with each contractor covering the key points that are important to you (i.e. what was done, were any problems found, do they have any suggestions etc.)

- Have a sign in book for all visitors, so that you know when they were onsite and how long they were there for
- Write to your contractors and tell them what you expect of them. Ask them to sign the letter and return to you

Whatever you do, you need to make sure that whatever happens in your kitchen, that the integrity and safety of your food products are maintained.

Until next edition,
Eat well. Eat safe!

Gavin Buckett

Founder and Managing Director
The Gourmet Guardian

Website: www.australianfoodsafety.com.au
Email: gavin@australianfoodsafety.com.au

WIN!

Question of the Month

Do you have anything you'd like to know about? The next Question of the Month will be awarded a probe thermometer valued at \$60.00.

Email your questions to Gavin at: gavin@australianfoodsafety.com.au and be sure to mention Food 4 Thought for your chance to learn AND win!