



FOOD SAFETY IN FOOD BANKS

 **Toronto** Public Health

INTRODUCTION

Under the Food Premises Regulation, food banks are designated as a food premises. In a food premises, Toronto Public Health's role is to ensure that there are food safety measures in place to prevent foodborne illness. Given that food banks often rely on donated goods, there are a number of food safety issues that may arise that will be different from the food service or food retail environment.

Food banks receive, store, package, repack and distribute food to be consumed off the premises, they do not process or serve food. This document aims to be a guide to establishing food safety practice in food banks.

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Toronto Food Strategy

FOOD SAFETY

FOOD CATEGORIES

Low Risk Non-perishable Foods

Non-perishable food items do not require refrigeration to prevent spoilage or to maintain food safety. Non-perishable food items include foods such as dry goods, glass jar and bottled food products, and canned goods.

Food Safety Measures for Low Risk Non-perishable Food:

- Sort through glass bottles, glass jars and canned goods that may be damaged, broken, dented, or opened; these containers should be discarded.
- Check for expiry dates and best before dates where there is a concern for food safety (see page 5 for details).
- Bulk packaged dry goods that are repackaged into smaller quantities must be handled using clean utensils and safe food handling practices.
- Each new package of food must be labeled and dated.
- Only containers made of food grade materials should be used to repackage food products.

Low Risk Perishable Foods

Foods such as raw fruits and raw vegetables are categorized as low risk perishable foods.

Food Safety Measures for Low Risk Perishable Food Donations:

- Low risk perishable foods that have been processed (for example cut open or sliced into smaller portions) must be stored in the refrigerator.
- All whole low risk perishable foods stored for long periods of time, should be stored in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage.
- Spoilage can cause odours, attracting pests to the facility.
- Spoiled food must be disposed of in covered garbage containers or covered organic waste containers and removed frequently.

High Risk Foods

Foods such as dairy products, eggs, tofu, meat, fish and seafood are categorized as high risk / hazardous food products.

Food Safety Measures for High Risk / Hazardous Food:

- Cold foods should be kept refrigerated at 4° C (40° F) or colder and maintained at that temperature while the food is in storage.
- Frozen foods should be kept in the freezer at -18° C (0° F) or colder and maintained at that temperature while the food is in storage.
- High risk / hazardous foods must never be held in the danger zone between 4° C (40° F) to 60° C (140° F).
- Milk and milk products cannot be repackaged and must be distributed in their original container.
- Meat and meat products must be distributed in their original container. If large portions are to be repackaged, proper food safety measures must be followed, with the original date labelled on the new package (see Labeling on page 8).
- Any repackaging of raw hazardous / high risk foods must be in a separate area to prevent cross contamination of other food items.
- Food grade materials should be used to repackage food products.
- Eggs that are visibly cracked should be thrown out.
- Eggs should be of grade 'A' quality.
- Food Handler training of employees responsible for repackaging high risk foods is highly recommended.

Cooked / Prepared Foods

Foods that have been cooked/prepared before being donated to the food bank are categorized as cooked/prepared foods.

Food Safety Measures for Cooked / Prepared Food Donations:

- Accept cooked / prepared foods only from food premises that are regularly inspected by Public Health.
- Food should be in food grade containers/packages.
- Food should be clearly identifiable and labeled.
- Frozen prepared food should not show any signs of thawing or freezer burn.
- Food should have not been reheated prior to donation.
- Food must be accepted at the following temperatures: frozen at -18° C (0° F) or colder; refrigerated at 4° C (40° F) or colder.
- Food must be maintained frozen at -18° C (0° F) or colder, refrigerated at 4° C (40° F) or colder until distributed to food bank clients.
- Keep temperature logs for cooked / prepared foods.
- If available, keep a list of donors of the cooked / prepared food items.

FOOD SAFETY MEASURES

Food Donations That Should NOT be Accepted by Food Banks:

- Food products that are not easily identifiable.
- Partially consumed foods.
- Uninspected wild game.
- Unpasteurized dairy products.
- Unpasteurized juices.
- Home preserved foods (such as jams, jellies, and compotes).
- Home canned vegetables.
- Home canned meats and fish.
- Any food items from an unapproved / uninspected source.

Food Safety Measures for Transporting Food:

- Any vehicle used to transport food to and from the food bank must be maintained in a manner that is sanitary to prevent cross contamination of food.
- Food items that require refrigeration should be maintained at 4° C (40°F) or colder during transportation.
- Food items that are frozen should be maintained at -18° C (0° F) or colder during transportation.
- The containers holding the packaged food items must be kept clean and sanitary.
- All food should be kept covered during transportation.

Damaged Food

The extent of the damage to food from extreme situations such as a fire and flood cannot always be assessed for cross contamination by examination of the food products alone. As a result, damaged donated food should be deemed to be hazardous, unfit for consumption and not accepted.

Food Safety Measures for Food Storage

- Dry goods must be stored on shelves, racks or pallets 15 cm (or 6 in) off of the ground and away from the wall to allow for easy access to clean and to monitor pest control.
- All food items must be protected from physical, chemical and microbiological contamination during storage.
- Cleaning agents and other poisonous or toxic materials must be properly labeled and stored away from food items.

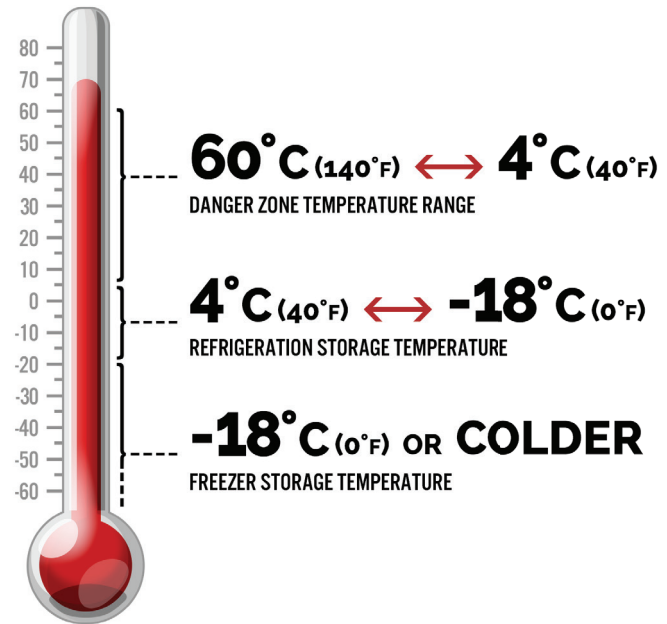
TEMPERATURE CONTROL

Temperature abuse occurs when hazardous foods that require refrigeration to maintain food safety are stored in the danger zone at the temperature range between 4° C (40° F) to 60° C (140° F).

At this temperature range, bacteria that cause illness can multiply quickly, increasing the risk of foodborne illness.

The same principles of temperature control can also be used for low risk perishable foods to reduce the chance of food spoilage.

Important Temperatures



FOOD DATING

Best Before Dates

The best before date speaks only to the freshness and shelf life of an unopened package of food.

Best before dates are simply the manufacturer's promise to the consumer that the food in the package will contain the highest amount of nutrients as stated on the label, and the food will also be of the highest quality.

Some manufacturer's place a best before date on food items even though they are not required to do so.

In many cases, this is an arbitrary date with no real scientific bearing; however, it is a good indicator as to when the nutritional value and the quality of the food will start to decrease.

In other words, the taste and the texture and the nutrients in the food may change after the best before date.

High risk hazardous foods can also be deemed unfit for consumption before the expiry date, due to temperature abuse.

If the food product is non-hazardous, unopened in its original package, stored under normal conditions, and there has been no damage to the seal of the package, **there is no food safety concern** with food products that have passed their best before date.

If there is any uncertainty regarding the quality of the food product, remember the saying: **when in doubt, throw it out.**

Expiry Dates

The only food products that expire are foods that have a much longer shelf life than most processed foods and have a critical nutritional value. Any other food item that claims to have an expiry date is misleading.

Food items that must have an expiry date include baby formulas, meal replacements, formulated liquid diets and nutritional supplements.

There is a food safety concern due to the microbiological activity and the physical stability of these food items, and these foods **should not be consumed** after the expiry date on the label has passed.

All donations of food products (baby formulas, meal replacements, and formulated liquid diets) pass their expiry dates must be thrown out.

Note: Both expiry and best before dates use either numbers or letters to indicate the month:

MONTH / NUMBER / ABBREVIATION					
JANUARY	01	JA	JULY	07	JL
FEBRUARY	02	FE	AUGUST	08	AU
MARCH	03	MR	SEPTEMBER	09	SE
APRIL	04	AL	OCTOBER	10	OC
MAY	05	MA	NOVEMBER	11	NO
JUNE	06	JN	DECEMBER	12	DE

LABELING

If large food products are being broken down into smaller units to be repackaged, the new packages must be labelled with the same ingredient information found on the original packaging.

Also, this label should include the best before or expiry date listed on the original product. Lastly, the date the food was re-packaged should also be listed with a label stating, "Repackaged on day/month/year."

FOOD RECALLS

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has a recall procedure when an identified food item is being removed from shelves.

Several issues can lead to a food recall:

- Illness outbreak - Public health identifies a potential link between foodborne illness and a specific food product.
- Food test result - Food test results identify a possible health risk to consumers.
- CFIA inspection finding - CFIA inspection activities detect a food safety concern.
- Consumer complaint - A consumer complaint is received about the safety of a food product.
- Company-initiated recall - A company informs the CFIA that it is starting a self-initiated recall.
- Recall in other country - Another country recalls a food product that is also sold in Canada.
- Other triggers - Other triggers can include information from police about potential food tampering, trade complaints, any information from any other reliable source.

Food Safety Measures During a Food Recall

- Identify the product based on the information given during the recall (for example product name, or manufacturer's code).
- Food recalls are very specific: only a specific product made during a specific time period would be affected.
- Identify the reason for the recall. The reasons could be improper labelling (a common allergen not identified as an ingredient), a foreign object (bits of plastic or metal from processing) or bacterial contamination.
- A recalled product should be returned to the store, if the product was donated through a retail food premises. Otherwise, the food should be thrown out.
- If the recalled food product has already been distributed to the food bank's clients, contact Toronto Public Health for advice on the next steps.

POWER OUTAGES

A power failure can result in food becoming spoiled due to a lack of refrigeration. There is also an increased risk of foodborne illness if hazardous foods are held in the danger zone.

If the power is quickly restored, the food can be kept safe by keeping the refrigerator door closed, as much as possible.

Food Safety Measures During Power Outages - The Freezer (-18° C / 0° F or colder):

- Without power a full upright or chest freezer will keep everything frozen for about 2 days.
- Without power a half-full freezer will keep food frozen 1 day.
- Adding ice can keep the freezer colder for longer.
- Frozen food that has maintained 4° C (40°F) or colder can be refrozen if the power has been restored.
- Throw out any thawed food that has risen to the danger zone, between 4° C (40° F) to 60 ° C (140° F).
- If raw hazardous food has leaked during thawing, wash, rinse and sanitize the areas the food has contaminated.
- Do not re-use wash cloths until they have been cleaned and disinfected.

Food Safety Measures During Power Outages - The Refrigerator (4° C / 40° F or colder):

- Without power, the refrigerator will keep food cool 4-6 hours, depending on the kitchen temperature.
- Adding ice can keep food in the refrigerator cooler for longer.
- Throw out any refrigerated food that has risen to the danger zone, between 4° C (40° F) to 60 ° C (140° F).

EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

EMPLOYEE / VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Food bank employees and volunteers who have been trained in the basics of food safety will minimize the risk of distributing unsafe food items.

Food bank employees and volunteers who are responsible for receiving and distributing food; assessing the safety of food; and, involved in extensive food handling, should be encouraged to participate in a Food Handler Certification program.

Food Safety Measures for Employee / Volunteer Hygiene

All food bank employees and volunteers who work in direct contact with food must:

- Be provided with adequate storage facilities for their clothing and their personal belongings.
- Maintain a clean appearance.
- Wash their hands before starting work, before putting on gloves, after using the toilet facilities, after smoking, after eating, after handling any raw food items, and as often as necessary.
- Avoid drinking, eating, smoking in any areas where food items or food handling utensils are exposed.
- Wear headgear such as a hat, visor, bandana, or hair net to restrain their hair when handling food.
- Use utensils when handling food.
- Should not be at work while sick and experiencing any symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, infected cuts, lesions, or boils.

MAINTENANCE

WASHING UTENSILS

Utensil Maintenance

Utensils include items such as tongs, spoons, and scoops that are used to re-portion or repack food, and multi-service containers to store food.

Food Safety Measures for Utensil Maintenance

- Utensils must be made of a material that is non-toxic, non-corrosive.
- Utensils must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized using a commercial dishwasher; or, using the 2 compartment sink method; or, using the 3 compartment sink method.
- After sanitizing, the items should be allowed to air dry.

Sinks

Hand-wash sink

- A separate hand wash sink is required in areas where extensive food handling will take place (such as repackaging / re-portioning food items).
- The hand wash sink must be supplied with hot and cold running water, soap in a dispenser, and paper towels.

2-compartment sink method

- Utensil washing sinks



3-compartment sink method

- Dish and utensil washing sinks



Mechanical Dishwashers

Only commercial mechanical dishwashers are to be used to wash utensils and multi-service containers.

The mechanical dishwasher will follow the cycle of wash, rinse and sanitize. All items removed from the dishwasher should be allowed to air dry.

SANITIZING EQUIPMENT

Food Safety Measures for Equipment Maintenance

- All equipment used for storing or handling food must be made of a material that will not cross-contaminate food and is easily cleanable.
- After use, the items must be washed, rinsed and sanitized and stored in a manner that will not cause cross contamination.
- After washing and rinsing, equipment and utensils can be sanitized using the formula and the procedure below.

ITEM	HOW TO MIX	SOLUTION STRENGTH	HOW TO USE
Utensils	1/2 TSP of bleach with one litre of water	100 PPM chlorine bleach (use test strips to check strength) (Note: Quaternary Ammonia at 200 ppm or Iodine at 25 ppm can also be used)	After washing and rinsing: Immerse the utensil in the solution in the sink for 45 seconds. Air dry.
Large equipment and food contact surfaces	1 TSP of bleach with one litre of water	200 PPM chlorine bleach (use test strips to check strength) (Note: Quaternary Ammonia at 400 ppm or Iodine at 50 ppm can also be used)	After washing and rinsing: Using a spray bottle, to cover the surface with the solution. Air dry.

Food Safety Measures for Using a Spray Bottle to Sanitize Large Equipment and Food Contact Surfaces:

- A new sanitizing solution must be made every day (see formula above).
- Label the spray bottle that contains the sanitizing solution.
- Store the sanitizing solution away from bright light.
- Do not mix the sanitizing solution with detergent.
- Use test strips to check the strength of the solution.

THE FACILITY

THE PREMISES

Construction

Construction relates to the physical facility the food bank is located in. New facilities should seek information and guidance regarding the construction from City of Toronto Divisions, including Toronto Public Health.

As food banks are considered to be a food premises, new and old operations are subject to the requirements under the Ontario Food Premises Regulations:

Lighting

Lighting should be adequate in all areas especially where the food is being sorted and examined, in areas where there is a hand-wash sink, where food utensils are cleaned and stored, as well as in washrooms. Lightbulbs should be shielded to prevent against cross-contamination of broken glass in unpackaged food.

Ventilation

The physical facility must be well ventilated to maintain air quality, remove odours and to prevent condensation from forming on surfaces and falling onto unprotected food.

Floors, Walls and Ceiling

Should be cleaned, maintained and in good repair.

GARBAGE

Garbage must be stored in a container that is leak-proof, made of a non-absorbent material that has a tight-fitting lid.

Garbage must be removed regularly and in a sanitary manner. After emptying, the garbage container must be cleaned thoroughly before re-use.

SANITARY FACILITIES

Washrooms must be kept in good repair, with a supply of paper towels and toilet paper. Also, all fixtures within the washroom must be cleaned and maintained in a sanitary manner.

PEST CONTROL

Effective measures such as screen doors, sealing of cracks and crevices, monitoring for activity, as well as, cleaning must be maintained in order to ensure that pests that can cross-contaminate food (rats, mice, flies, cockroaches) do not enter the food bank. If assistance in maintaining effective pest control is needed, consult a licensed pest control company.

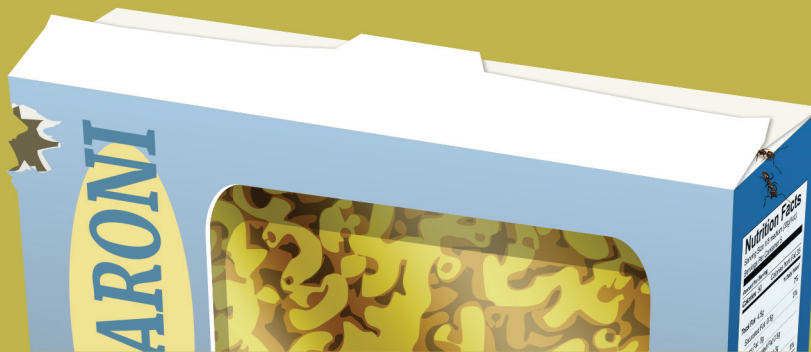
There are a number of pests such as Indian Meal Moths, flour beetles and weevils that are found in dry goods such as beans, flour and grains. Currently, there is no food safety issue with these pests; however, care must be taken to ensure that pest control is maintained in the facility.

GUIDELINES FOR CHECKING BOXED CONTAINERS

BOXES WITH ANY THESE DEFECTS MAY BE UNSAFE. DISCARD THEM.



- DISCARD IF:
- BOX IS ALREADY OPENED
 - BOX IS TORN, LEAKING, OR CONTAMINATED
 - INSECTS, INSECT SKINS, WEBS, CHAFF OR MOVING PIECES CAN BE SEEN



- DISCARD IF:
- MOULDY OR FOREIGN OBJECTS ARE INSIDE
 - SPILL OR STAIN FROM UNKNOWN CONTAMINANT
 - SEALS ARE IMPERFECT



GUIDELINES FOR CHECKING GLASS OR PLASTIC FOOD CONTAINERS

CONTAINERS WITH ANY OF THESE DEFECTS MAY BE UNSAFE. DISCARD THEM.



DISCARD IF YOU FIND:

- LOOSE CAP OR BULGED SAFETY SEAL
- LEAKS ON SCREWS OR EVIDENCE OF SUBMERSION
- CRACKS OR CHIPS
- INCOMPLETE, MISSING OR ILLEGIBLE LABELS



DISCARD IF YOU FIND:

- DIRT, WEBS, INSECT SKINS
- MOLD (WHICH CAN BE LONG, STRINGY, CLUMPY OR ROPY; OFTEN WHITE OR DARK)
- FOREIGN OBJECTS OR UNUSUAL PRODUCT SEPARATION



GUIDELINES FOR CHECKING BAGGED FOOD CONTAINERS

BAGS WITH ANY OF THESE DEFECTS MAY BE UNSAFE. DISCARD THEM.



DISCARD IF YOU FIND:

- ANY RIPS, TEARS, PUNCTURES OR HOLES
- MISSING OR ILLEGIBLE LABEL
- SPILLS OR STAINS FROM ANY UNKNOWN SOURCE OR ANY CONTAMINANT



SIGNS OF INSECTS:

- BUGS IN SEAMS
- BORE HOLES
- MOVEMENT OR SPOTS
- INSECT SKINS OR CHAFF IN BOTTOM OF CONTAINER

SIGNS OF RODENTS:

- DROPPINGS OR URINE STAINS
- BITE OR SCRATCH MARKS

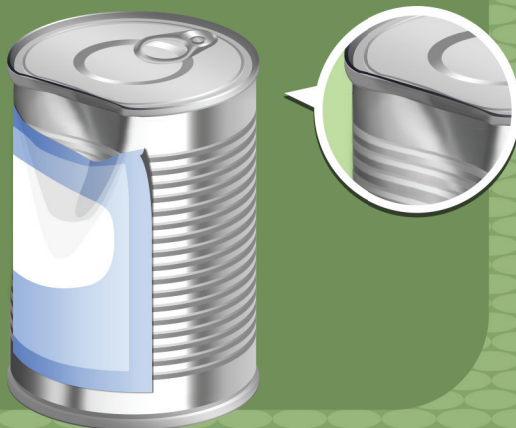


GUIDELINES FOR **CHECKING CANNED GOODS**

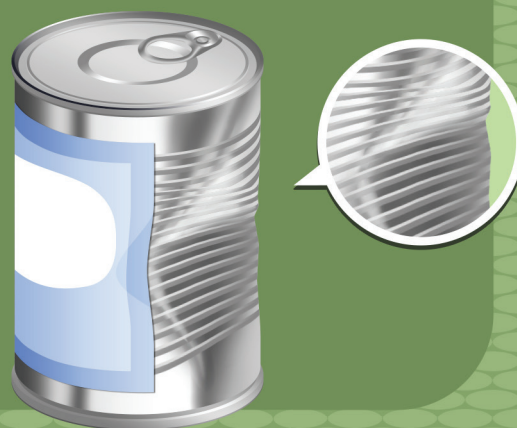
CANS WITH ANY OF THESE DEFECTS MAY BE UNSAFE. DISCARD THEM.



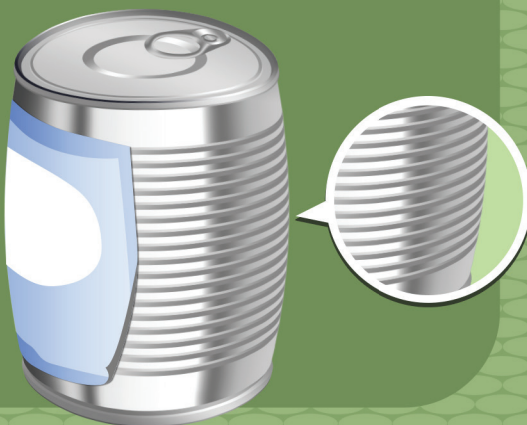
**DENTED AT JUNCTION
WHERE SIDE AND END
MEET**



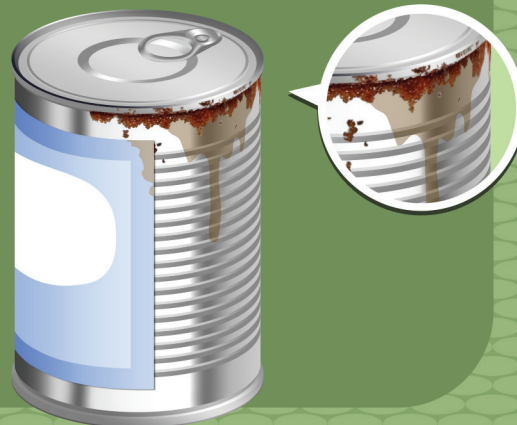
**SHARP DENT OR
DENT ON SEAM**



SWOLLEN OR BULGING



**PITTED RUST OR
LEAKING**



GLASS JAR DEFECTS

JARS WITH ANY OF THESE DEFECTS MAY BE UNSAFE, DISCARD THEM



INNER SEAL OR TAMPER
RESISTANT TAPE
MISSING OR BROKEN



DIRT UNDER THE RIM



VACUUM BUTTON RAISED,
CROOKED LID, OTHER
EVIDENCE THAT CAP
HAS BEEN OPENED



LEAKING, CRACK OR CHIPS,
OR PRODUCT DISCOLOURED



HOME CANNED / BOTTLED GOODS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE. DISCARD.

GUIDELINES FOR DISTRIBUTING FOOD PAST THE BEST BEFORE DATE

PRODUCT AND DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME PAST THE BEST BEFORE DATE				
	ROOM TEMP.	REFRIGERATED	FROZEN	CANNED/JARRED	BOXED/BAGGED
Fruits / Vegetables Fresh Produce	Fresh 2-7 days	Fresh 1-4 Weeks (depending on produce)	1 Year	1 Year	N/A
Fruit / Veg Juices Juices and Drinks-Tetra Pak, Bottled (Not requiring refrigeration prior to opening)	1 Month (Tetra Pak)	3-6 Months (Tetra Pak)	1 Year	1 Year	N/A
Bread Loaves, Rolls, Bagels, Muffins	1 Week	2 Week	1 Month	N/A	1 Week
Grains & Cereals Granola, Flours, Rices, Dry Pastas, Cookies, Crackers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6-12 Months
Meat Uncooked Packaged and Bulk	Less than 2 Hours	3-4 Days	beef, lamb pork, veal, whole poultry 12 months, poultry pcs. 6 months, ground meat 2-3 months, fish 2-6 months, and shellfish 2-4 months	N/A	N/A
Meat Cooked Examples: Prepared Food from Food Service Providers. Canned Tuna, Salmon	Less than 2 Hours	Fish and Shellfish 1-2 days other 3 Days	beef, lamb pork, veal, 3 months whole poultry 2 months, food mixtures 3 months	1 Year	N/A
Deli Meats Deli Meats, Sausages	Less than 2 Hours	5-7 days	2-3 Months	1 Year	N/A
Dairy - Pasteurized Milk (Fresh, Powdered, Canned)	< 2 Hours (after open)	2 Weeks (after open / reconstituted)	6 Months	1 Year	Varies*
Dairy - Sterilized Tetra-Pak Milk (UHT)	< 2 Hours (after open)	2 Weeks (after open / reconstituted)	N/A	N/A	6 Months
Fats Butter, Margarine	1 Week	3 Months	6 Months	N/A	N/A
Combination Foods May contain Popcorn, Condiments, Tomato Sauces, Canned Pastas, Cooking Oils	N/A	N/A	3 Months	1 Year	6 Months
Soups / Stews Soups, Stews, Gravies. Could be Food Service Packaged or in Larger Quantities	Less than 2 Hours	2-3 Days	3 Months	1 Year	1 Year
Non-Food Laundry Detergent, Deodorants, Mixed Product Pallets, Body Washes, Diapers, Infant Wipes	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 Year	1 Year
Infant Formula and Nutritional Supplements	Do Not Distribute Past Expiry Date Note: These products do not contain Best Before Dates, only Expiry Dates				