

HACCP Makes for Safer Food



HACCP (pronounced as "has sip") is an acronym for "Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point", which is a concept that is fast gaining acceptance in food establishments.

It is a process control system that identifies where hazards might occur in the food production process and sets actions in place to prevent these hazards from occurring. Because of the sensitive nature of food production, the underlying concept is that "Prevention Is Better Than Cure".

This system was first developed in the 1960's to ensure that foods supplied to the American astronauts under the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) programme are free of pathogens and toxins. Today we use HACCP as a powerful management tool to identify areas of concern where failure has not been experienced, so that action can be taken to prevent such failure from happening. It works on the worse scenario-basis and comes up with the appropriate preventive and corrective actions.

HACCP Programmes control the entire process, starting from the raw materials, the processing environment and the people involved, and to complete the cycle, many companies extend it right down to delivery to the consumer. If properly implemented, HACCP Programmes provide a high degree of confidence that the final product is safe for human consumption.



What are the Hazards?

The likely hazards are biological, chemical or physical in nature and they can cause a food product to be unsafe for human consumption.

Biological Contaminants are the microorganisms and parasites belonging to the *Entamoeba*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella* and *Vibro* species. Contamination sources within the premises are unhygienic handling, improper sanitation and transmission by insect, bird and rodent pests.

Chemical Contaminants come from chemical residues in the raw materials used or are introduced within the premises, including the misapplication of pesticides by the Pest Management personnel.

The most common risk areas in Pest Management are applying pesticides that are not approved or not formulated for food establishments (e.g. using pesticides with strong odour that taint products), applying pesticides too close to food preparation areas, causing the pesticides to bounce off the treated walls onto the final products and not following label instructions.

Physical Contaminants from within the premises can be the result of deliberate or accidental action. Some obvious Physical Hazards are poorly maintained equipment and not donning hairnet in food preparation areas.



How Can Pest Management Support HACCP?

Traditionally, Pest Management depended on spot-checks and random samplings. This tended to be reactive and resulted in "bush-fire fighting" the symptoms and not tackling the real cause.

With HACCP, which emphasises prevention, the role of Pest Management has changed to proactive. It also means that Pest Management personnel now have to work more closely and communicate more accurately with the Clients, especially the Sanitarians, by pinpointing and correcting potential problem areas that can contribute to pest infestation.

The main objective of the Pest Management Programme is to ensure that pests with the ability to transfer pathogens responsible for food borne illnesses must not be given the opportunity to survive and threaten consumers. At the same time the Pest Management personnel must not introduce any new hazard through their presence or treatment.

Role of Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the approach that uses an intelligent combination of management resources and strategies, aimed at eliminating pest problems by focusing on inspection and non-toxic methods, thereby minimizing the dependency on pesticides.

To qualify as truly IPM, at least 2 types of control measures must be employed to solve a pest problem. IPM calls for a "HOLISTIC APPROACH", which means taking a step back from the problem and consider the WHOLE situation including the construction, operation and surrounding environment that can contribute to ongoing pest problems or represent difficulties towards gaining the agreed standard of Pest Management.

Pest Management plays a critical role in preventing pest infestation so that food products are safe for human consumption. HACCP requires that such a Pest Management Programme is properly monitored, recorded and documented.



If you need any help in setting up pest-related HACCP programmes, please contact Aardwolf Pestkare (Tel: 6268 1771 for our 24-hour service). Our Surveyors will be very happy to work with you.