



Aotearoa
Food
Rescue
Alliance



2026 FOOD SAFETY GUIDE

FOR FOOD RESCUE ORGANISATIONS,
DRIVERS, SORTERS, STAFF AND
VOLUNTEERS



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1

Introduction: the importance of food safety

This guide is for everyone involved in food rescue, including drivers, sorters, packers, staff, coordinators, and volunteers. If you handle rescued kai at any stage, this guide is for you.

Food safety is about protecting the dignity of donated kai, keeping people healthy, and upholding trust in food rescue organisations. While donated food is not subject to the same rules as traded food under the Food Act 2014, our sector has a duty of care. Safe practices protect people and our organisations, and respect the mana of kai.

Food can cause harm and be contaminated in several ways, including:



Biological hazards: harmful bacteria or viruses



Chemical hazards: residues or toxins



Physical hazards: foreign objects like glass or metal



Allergen hazards: undisclosed allergens



By following this guide, everyone involved in food rescue helps ensure kai is safe, valued, and nourishing.

2

Food Safety Responsibilities, the Good Samaritan Clause, and Community Meals

The Good Samaritan Clause - Immunity of Food Donors

Under Section 352 of the Food Act 2014, businesses and individuals donating food in good faith are legally protected from liability if certain conditions are met. This is often called the Good Samaritan Clause.

352 Immunity of food donors

A donor is protected from civil and criminal liability that results from the consumption of food donated by the donor if:

- (a) the food was safe and suitable when it left the possession or control of the donor; and
- (b) as applicable, the donor provided the recipient with the information reasonably necessary to maintain the safety and suitability of the food.

In this section, donor means a person who donates food:

- (a) in good faith for a charitable, benevolent, or philanthropic purpose; and*
- (b) with the intention that the consumer of the food would not have to pay for it.*

Important limitation: who the clause covers

The Good Samaritan Clause applies only to people who donate food they normally sell. It does not cover individuals donating homemade or homegrown food. A person giving away home-baked goods or produce from their garden does not have this legal protection. FROs accepting such donations carry full responsibility for safe handling from the moment of collection.

What this means in practice:

- If these conditions are met, supermarkets, growers, manufacturers, food service businesses, and individuals can all donate food without fear of prosecution.
- Food rescue organisations still carry the responsibility for safe handling once food is in their care.
- Donors must not knowingly pass on unsafe food, mislabelled items, or recalled products without proper information.
- The protection applies only when donations are made with charitable purposes, not for profit.



The Good Samaritan Clause does not remove the need for good food safety practices.

It simply protects well-intentioned commercial donors who meet the above conditions.

View the legislation at:

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0032/latest/DLM5431609.html>

2a Community Meals, Koha, and When Registration May Be Required

Many Food Rescue and community organisations use rescued kai to prepare meals for their communities. This is a valued and important part of food rescue work. The legal position around preparing and distributing these meals depends on whether a charge or koha is collected, how often meals are provided, and the nature of the organisation.



Freely given meals with no payment or koha

Preparing meals from rescued kai and giving them away completely free of charge, with no expectation of any payment or contribution, falls outside the scope of the Food Act 2014 as a commercial activity. The Food Act focuses on food that is sold or traded. Where no payment or contribution of any kind is requested or expected, registration as a food business is not required.

All organisations operating in this way should still maintain good food safety practices. The duty of care to the people receiving the food remains, even without a formal registration obligation.



Meals provided in exchange for a koha or voluntary contribution

This is an area where Food Rescue organisations should take care. Where a koha is genuinely optional and nothing is specified, expected, or required in return for kai, the arrangement is likely to remain outside the definition of a commercial sale under the Food Act 2014.

However, where a koha or suggested contribution becomes effectively a price (for example, where a sign states a specific dollar amount per meal, or where entry to a meal service is conditional on giving something) the arrangement may be treated as a sale or exchange under the Food Act 2014. Section 13 of the Act defines "sale" broadly and includes bartering and exchanging food commercially.

MPI guidance states that registration under the Food Act is required if you are "bartering or exchanging food commercially". If there is any expectation of payment or contribution in exchange for a meal, even an informal one, registration requirements may apply.



Fundraising meals

The Food Act 2014 allows a person or group to trade in food for the sole purpose of raising money for a charitable, benevolent, philanthropic, or cultural purpose, without registering as a food business, for up to 20 occasions in any calendar year. Fundraising activities such as community dinners or kai events where money is raised for a charitable purpose fall within this exemption, provided they occur no more than 20 times per year.

If an organisation runs community meal events more than 20 times per year, or if the events are more than incidental to the FRO's activities, registration under the Food Act 2014 is likely to be required. Use MPI's My Food Rules tool to check: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/food-safety-rules>

Regular community meal programmes

Organisations that operate a regular community meal service - for example, a weekly community dinner open to the public - will in most cases need to register under the Food Act 2014. This is particularly true where:

- Meals are provided more than 20 times per year
- Any contribution, koha, or payment is expected or requested
- The meal service is a primary activity of the organisation rather than an incidental one

Registration does not need to be a barrier. Many community organisations operate successfully under a Food Control Plan or National Programme. MPI provides templates and support to make this manageable. Contact MPI or your local council for guidance specific to your situation.

Marae and tangata whenua contexts

MPI recognises specific provisions for kai at marae. Food prepared and served for customary activities does not require registration under the Food Act 2014, and occasional fundraising is also exempt. However, food sold commercially on a marae does require registration. More information is available on MPI's marae food safety page: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/starting-a-food-business/exemptions-from-the-food-act/marae-food-safety-requirements>

Summary: meals and koha - what the law says

- **Free meals, no payment or koha of any kind:** Food Act registration not required, but food safety duties still apply.
- **Genuinely optional koha with no set amount or expectation:** Likely outside the definition of a sale, but organisations should keep this arrangement clearly voluntary to avoid ambiguity.
- **Koha with a suggested amount, or meals where a contribution is expected:** May constitute a sale or exchange under the Food Act 2014. Seek guidance from MPI or your local council.
- **Fundraising meals up to 20 times per year for a charitable purpose:** Exempt from Food Act registration under the charitable fundraising exemption.
- **Regular community meal programmes (more than 20 per year, or where any charge applies):** Registration under the Food Act 2014 is likely required.

If in doubt, use MPI's My Food Rules tool or contact your local council.

Reference: Food Act 2014, sections 13 and 352. MPI guidance on fundraising and community events: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/starting-a-food-business/exemptions-from-the-food-act/fundraising-and-community-event-food-safety-rules>

3 Accepting Food Donations

When accepting kai, it is important to assess whether donations are safe and suitable for redistribution, protecting both the recipients and your organisation.



Food that CAN be accepted:

Most surplus kai is acceptable if it is safe to eat. If you would eat it from your own pantry or fridge, it is generally safe to rescue.

Examples include:

- **Fresh fruit and vegetables** (including slightly bruised or "wonky" produce)
- **Bread and baked goods** (ensure loose bakery items are bagged or packaged before distribution)
- **Dairy products** (stored at 5 degrees Celsius or below)
- **Meat** (hard-frozen on or before its best-before date)
- **Dry goods** (pasta, rice, canned food, cereals)
- **Packaged snacks and non-alcoholic drinks**
- **Pre-cut salads with best-before dates** (must be regularly checked for spoilage)
- **Homegrown produce** that is fresh and intact



Food that CANNOT be accepted:

Some foods carry higher risks or are unsafe to redistribute, including:

- **Food past its use-by date.** The use-by date is a hard safety limit - food must not be donated or distributed after this date, even if it looks and smells fine. Food may be frozen on or before its use-by date to extend shelf life, but food that has already passed its use-by date cannot be made safe by freezing.
- **Food that has been thawed and refrozen** (including imported meat or seafood defrosted on arrival)
- **Packaging that is broken, heavily dented, rusted, or bulging**
- **Food with visible spoilage** (mould, slime, rot, off smells)
- **Plate waste from hospitality venues**
- **Unlabelled or mislabelled food** (unless correct information is provided and the food is relabelled accordingly)
- **Food subject to recall** (unless MPI or the donor confirms it can be relabelled and safely used)
- **Alcoholic beverages**
- **Medicines** (including supplements, vitamins, and over-the-counter medicines)
- **Food that the donor knows contains microorganisms, undeclared allergens, toxins, or chemicals** that would make it unsafe for consumption

Guide to accepting cans

Damaged cans can put people at risk of foodborne illness. Use the simple rules below to decide whether a can is safe to keep or should be discarded.

Discard the can if:

- It is severely creased, crushed, or has sharp or pointed dents
- Two dents meet to form a weak spot
- Dents affect the end seam or side seam
- The can is swollen, bulging, leaking, or has rust you cannot wipe off
- The label is missing or unreadable, so you cannot identify the contents or expiry date

Safe to donate if:

- The can has a small, smooth dent that does not touch the seam
- A minor ding is on the edge but the seal is intact
- A dent is on a seamless end and does not form a crease or sharp point

Rule of thumb: When in doubt, throw it out.

Visual guide:

Thanks to KiwiHarvest for providing the below examples

Examples of cans that are safe to donate:



Smooth dents



Dents not on the seam

Examples of cans that are not safe to donate:



Severe dent in seam



Deep dents in can body



Missing or illegible labels



Holes or signs of leaking



Rust that cannot be wiped off



Swollen areas or bulges

4 Transporting Food

Keeping food at the right temperature

The safety of kai depends on keeping food at the correct temperature during transport. Chilled food must remain cold, and frozen food must remain hard-frozen. This prevents the growth of harmful bacteria, preserves food quality, and ensures donor confidence in food rescue operations.

Note: the 4-hour rule applies cumulatively. If food has already been out of refrigeration for a period before transport, that time counts towards the total. Always factor in any prior handling time when making decisions about food safety during transit.

To keep kai at safe temperatures during transportation, follow these key practices:

- **Always follow donor requirements.** In some cases, these may be stricter than the recommendations provided here.
- **Match the method to the distance, duration, and product.** Long journeys require refrigerated or freezer vehicles, while short trips may be managed with insulated solutions such as chilly bins, chiller bags, insulated crates, or thermal blankets. Factor in climate and any likely traffic delays. Rescued kai closer to the end of its life may need stricter temperature control than food with a longer shelf life.
- **Chilled food:** Keep at 5 degrees Celsius or below during transport. For trips under one hour, insulated containers are acceptable if the food stays at or below 5 degrees Celsius. For trips over one hour, or in hot weather, use a refrigerated vehicle.
- **Frozen food:** Must remain hard-frozen throughout. For trips under one hour, insulated containers may be used provided the food stays solidly frozen. Any softening indicates a temperature breach. For trips over one hour, or where required by the donor, use a freezer vehicle.

Transport temperature summary table

Food Type	Trip Duration	Minimum Standard	Transport Method
Chilled	Under 1 hour	5 degrees C or below	Insulated container (chilly bin, chiller bag, insulated crates, thermal blankets)
Chilled	Over 1 hour	5 degrees C or below	Refrigerated vehicle - monitor temperature during stops
Frozen	Under 1 hour	Must remain hard-frozen throughout	Insulated container with ice packs or dry ice if needed - check food is still solidly frozen on arrival
Frozen	Over 1 hour	Must remain hard-frozen throughout	Freezer vehicle at -18 degrees C or lower - monitor temperature during stops

Hygiene practices during transport

- Separation: Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep things clean: Use clean crates, boxes, or bins. Clean and disinfect cargo areas and equipment regularly.

Contingency planning

- Each food rescue organisation should have a written plan for managing delays, breakdowns, or extreme weather that may affect safe temperatures.
- This plan should include steps for rerouting or returning food, and for documenting and safely disposing of food if it becomes unsafe.
- Record all actions taken in any incident.

Monitoring

- Use thermometers or remote temperature sensors to check food temperatures during and after transport. Record and review temperature logs.
- Many AFRA members recommend remote temperature sensors as they can automatically send alerts if temperatures rise too high.

Checklist for drivers:

Drivers play a critical role in food safety. Drivers should always:

- ✓ Check temperatures before and after trips
- ✓ Use the right transport method for the distance (see table above)
- ✓ Separate raw and ready-to-eat foods
- ✓ Keep crates and vehicles clean
- ✓ Follow donor-specific requirements

If delays occur, monitor temperatures and follow your contingency plan

5 Sorting & Storage

Food needs to be checked, sorted, and stored safely once it arrives. Good sorting and storage practices are essential for keeping kai safe until it reaches the people who need it. Handle food as you would want it handled for your own whānau - with care, attention, and respect.

What to look out for when sorting and storing:

- **Use-by dates:** A use-by date means there is a potential health risk if the food is consumed after midnight of that date. Never distribute food past this date under any circumstances.
- **Best-before dates:** Indicate when a product is at its best quality. Food past its best-before date is generally still safe to eat, although quality will deteriorate. Check for any noticeable signs of spoilage. See the Best-Before Guidelines in Section 10.
- **Salads and pre-cut produce:** Check daily for signs of spoilage. Discard immediately if wet, slimy, or deteriorating.
- **Packaging:** Reject any items with broken seals (including vacuum-sealed packaging), bulging or heavily dented cans, or signs of contamination.
- **Pantry storage:** Store potatoes and onions in a cool, dark, dry place - not in chillers.
- **Separation:** Keep chilled foods apart from those requiring dry storage. Store raw foods separately from ready-to-eat foods. Bananas will accelerate the ripening of other produce, and onions and potatoes should not be stored together.

Temperature control

Correct temperatures are one of the most important safeguards for food safety:

- **Chilled storage:** between 1 degree C and 4 degrees C (do not go below 1 degree C as this risks freezing some products)
- **Frozen storage:** -18 degrees C or below
- **Monitoring:** check and record temperatures of all refrigeration and freezer units daily



Emergency rule

Food must not be in the temperature danger zone (between 5 degrees C and 60 degrees C) for more than 4 hours in total.

This is a cumulative rule - it includes all time spent out of safe temperature control, not just during a single incident. If equipment fails, see Section 5a below for guidance on power cuts.

5a

Power Cuts and Equipment Failures

A power cut or refrigeration failure is one of the most common food safety emergencies a Food Rescue organisation may face. Knowing how to respond quickly and what kai can still be safely used or donated can protect both people and food.

Can you donate food affected by a power cut?

Food that remains within safe temperature limits during a power cut may still be suitable for donation or rescue, provided it meets all the normal acceptance criteria.

The key test is whether the food has spent more than 4 hours in total above 5 degrees C (for chilled food) or has begun to thaw (for frozen food).

- If chilled food is still at or below 5 degrees C and has not exceeded the cumulative 4-hour danger zone limit, it may be donated, provided it is within its date and otherwise safe.
- If frozen food still contains ice crystals and the temperature has not exceeded 5 degrees C, it may be redistributed. It should not be refrozen at the FRO end if there is any doubt about the degree of thawing.
- If there is any uncertainty, do not donate the food. Document the decision and the reason.

The key rule: keep doors closed

The single most important thing you can do during a power cut is keep fridge and freezer doors closed. Every time a door is opened, warm air enters and accelerates the temperature rise.

How long is food safe?

These are general guidance figures based on MPI and Food Standards Australia New Zealand guidance. Actual times will vary depending on the factors listed below.

Unit type	Approximate safe time (doors closed)	Notes
Refrigerator or chiller	2 to 4 hours	At the 2-hour mark, begin monitoring internal temperature. Once the internal temperature exceeds 5 degrees C, the 4-hour rule clock starts for perishable food.
Freezer - fully loaded	Up to 48 hours	A full freezer holds temperature much longer because the frozen food mass acts as insulation.
Freezer - half full	Up to 24 hours	Less thermal mass means faster temperature rise.
Cool room - well insulated, fully stocked	Varies - monitor with thermometer	Large cool rooms may hold temperature for several hours depending on insulation quality, ambient temperature, and stock levels. Always use a thermometer rather than relying on estimates.

Factors that affect how quickly temperature rises

- **Fill level:** A fully stocked unit holds temperature longer than a partially stocked one. A full freezer has more thermal mass, so food mass helps keep other food cold.
- **Door openings:** Every time a door is opened, warm air enters. Minimise door openings. Do not open to check unless you have a thermometer ready to take a reading immediately.
- **Ambient temperature:** If the room or external environment is hot (for example, during summer), temperature rise will be faster. A fridge in a cool room will fare better than one in a warm loading bay.
- **Insulation quality:** Older or poorly sealing units will lose temperature faster than modern, well-maintained equipment.
- **Unit size:** Larger commercial cool rooms typically hold temperature longer than small domestic-style units, due to greater thermal mass and insulation thickness.
- **Type of food stored:** High-water-content foods (meat, dairy, prepared meals) are more susceptible to bacterial growth once temperatures rise. Dry goods and frozen baked items are more forgiving.

What to do during a power cut:

- Note the time the power went off. This is the start of your clock.
- Keep all refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- If you have a temperature probe or remote sensor, check temperatures without opening doors where possible. If you must open a door, take a temperature reading immediately.
- Move the most at-risk food (raw meat, dairy, prepared meals) into insulated containers with ice packs or dry ice if the outage is expected to be prolonged.
- Contact your food rescue organisation if you are a donor with food that needs to be moved quickly. See the printable reference card at the end of this document.

Power Cuts and Equipment Failures

Deciding what to keep after power is restored

Food type	Still safe if...	Discard if...
Frozen food	Still contains ice crystals and has not exceeded 5 degrees C	Has fully thawed or reached above 5 degrees C for more than 2 hours
Partially thawed frozen food	Still has ice crystals - can be refrozen, though quality may suffer	No ice crystals present - move to fridge and use promptly; do not refreeze
Raw meat, poultry, seafood	Still cold (at or below 5 degrees C) and within total safe time	Above 5 degrees C for more than 2 hours total - discard
Dairy (milk, cream, yoghurt, soft cheese)	Still cold and within 4 hours total out of safe temperature	Above 5 degrees C for more than 4 hours - discard
Prepared meals, cooked rice or pasta	Still cold and within 4 hours total out of safe temperature	Above 5 degrees C for more than 4 hours - discard
Hard cheeses, butter	Generally safe even after brief temperature rise - check for obvious spoilage	Visible mould or off smell
Eggs (in shell)	Intact and clean - generally safe after brief temperature rise	Cracked or very warm for extended period
Fruit and vegetables	No visible spoilage	Signs of deterioration or off smell
Canned goods, dry goods	Packaging intact - not affected by power cuts	Damaged packaging

Important:

Never taste food to determine if it is safe. Harmful bacteria do not always produce obvious smells or visible changes. If in doubt, throw it out.

For further guidance, refer to MPI's food safety in natural disasters and emergencies page:
<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-safety-in-natural-disasters-and-emergencies>

6 Handling High Risk Foods

Some foods carry a higher risk of contamination or illness than others. These items require extra care, strict handling, and in some cases should be avoided altogether.

The golden rule is: if you are unsure whether the risks can be managed safely, do not accept or distribute the food.

Meat & Poultry

- Freeze meat on or before its best-before date.
- Keep raw meat separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods at all times.
- Meat that has been frozen and then defrosted must never be refrozen. This includes imported meat that is sometimes frozen for transportation and defrosted on arrival.
- When distributing frozen meat, include a label with the freezing date and usage instructions.

Eggs

- Eggs must be clean, crack-free, and stored in a cool place. They can be distributed up to 14 days past the best-before date.
- Cartons with one or two cracked eggs may be collected from the donor provided the yolk and white has not spilt over onto other eggs. Remove cracked eggs before distribution.
- Given that many food rescue recipients include vulnerable people, recipients should be advised to cook eggs thoroughly. This is particularly important for people who are pregnant, elderly, or immunocompromised.
- More information on handling eggs: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1216/direct/>

Raw Chicken, Seafood and Shellfish

- AFRA strongly recommends avoiding the rescue and redistribution of raw chicken and fresh shellfish, as these foods carry very high microbiological risks.
- If your organisation chooses to handle them, ensure strict controls are in place, including trained staff or volunteers and verified cold chain storage.
- Seafood that has been frozen and then defrosted must never be refrozen. This includes imported seafood such as frozen salmon and surimi that is sometimes defrosted on arrival.

Dairy

- Keep all dairy products chilled at 5 degrees Celsius or below.
- Discard any dairy showing signs of spoilage (sour odour, curdling, mould).

Allergens

Under the Plain English Allergen Labelling (PEAL) rules, which came into force in February 2024, the following allergens must be declared on food labels:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Peanuts | • Soy |
| • Tree nuts: almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts | • Sesame |
| • Milk | • Lupin |
| • Eggs | • Fish |
| • Wheat (and gluten from wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, triticale) | • Molluscs |
| | • Crustacea |
| | • Added sulphites (when above 10mg/kg) |

Foods containing any of these allergens must be stored and handled separately from non-allergen foods to prevent cross-contamination. Where mixed boxes of unopened groceries are donated, assess on a case-by-case basis whether separation is required before redistribution.

Home-prepared or home-grown food

Home-prepared food (such as baked goods and cooked meals) carries higher food-safety risk because it is not made in a verified kitchen and cannot be checked or traced to the same standard as commercial food. Some home-prepared items are lower risk, such as shelf-stable cakes, plain breads, or biscuits, because they do not require refrigeration and have simple ingredients. Higher-risk items include foods that need strict temperature control (e.g., meat dishes, seafood, dairy-based desserts, cooked rice or pasta), as these can support bacterial growth if not handled safely.

Some organisations may still choose to accept home-prepared items, but only under strictly managed conditions that ensure the food is safe, labelled, and traceable.

Safe to accept:

- Whole, intact home-grown produce (fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs).

Home-prepared food may be accepted only when:

- It includes a full ingredients list and name and contact details of the person who made it.
- It contains no high-risk ingredients (e.g., raw eggs in uncooked products, fresh cream, seafood, meat dishes, or rice/pasta that may not have been safely cooled).
- The food is fresh, properly stored, and shows no signs of spoilage.
- Allergens are clearly disclosed.

Do not accept:

- Any home-prepared item without an ingredient list and contact details.
- Foods that require strict temperature control when you cannot verify safety.
- Items that appear unsafe, poorly packaged, or past their safe shelf-life.

Homekill & Recreational Catch

- Homekill and recreational catch are unregulated and therefore present significant food safety risks. They should only be accepted and distributed under strict conditions and in line with MPI guidance: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-safety-tips-fishing-hunting-homekill>
- Key risks include bacterial contamination (for example, Salmonella, E. coli) and chemical contamination (for example, poison baits, lead fragments from bullets).

If accepted:

- Clearly label the product as homekill or recreational catch and identify the type of meat.
- Provide storage and cooking instructions to recipients, including thorough cooking before consumption.
- If previously frozen, the food must be consumed within 24 hours of defrosting.



Important: Homekill and recreational catch are consumed entirely at the recipient's own risk. AFRA recommends prioritising regulated meat whenever possible.

7 People & Premises

Food safety relies as much on the people handling food as on the places where it is stored. Good hygiene, safe behaviour, and clean premises all help prevent contamination and protect the people who receive rescued kai.

Staff & Volunteers

- **Hand hygiene:** Wash hands properly before handling food, after breaks, after using washrooms, and after handling waste.
- **Personal hygiene:** Wear clean clothing, tie back long hair, and use hairnets, gloves, or aprons when needed. Avoid jewellery, loose sleeves, and items that may catch or contaminate food.
- **Illness:** No one who is sick or has symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, or fever should handle food. A 48-hour stand-down after gastrointestinal illness should be treated as a firm operational requirement given the vulnerability of many food rescue recipients, not just a recommendation.
- **Training:** All new team members should receive a food safety briefing. Ongoing refresher training ensures safe practices remain consistent.
- **Food Safety Leader:** Each Food Rescue organisation should have a dedicated Food Safety Leader responsible for keeping up to date with MPI recalls, maintaining records, and ensuring training is current.

Premises

- **Clean environments:** Food sorting surfaces, benches, and equipment should be cleaned and sanitised before and after each use. Floors should be swept and mopped regularly.
- **Cleaning schedules:** Create a clear schedule setting out what needs cleaning, how often, and by whom. Keep records.
- **Storage practices:** Only use food-grade packaging materials. Keep food storage areas separate from rubbish and recycling. Regularly check refrigerators, freezers, and chillers for maintenance issues.
- **Temperature monitoring:** Use thermometers to check cool rooms and fridges daily. Consider remote temperature sensors, which can provide alerts if temperatures rise above safe levels.

Pest Control

- **Prevention:** Keep bins covered, empty them regularly, and block or repair entry points such as doors, windows, and drains.
- **Monitoring:** Train staff and volunteers to look out for droppings, chewed packaging, or live pests.
- **Action:** If pests are detected, immediately discard affected food, clean the area thoroughly, and take measures to prevent further entry.
- **Control measures:** Use traps, bait stations, and insect killers correctly and safely, away from food. For serious infestations, engage a licensed pest control professional.
- **Chemical safety:** Store pest control products securely. Always follow manufacturer instructions and ensure treated areas are cleaned before food handling resumes.

8

Distributing Food

The last step in the food rescue chain is just as important as the first. Kai must leave your site in a safe condition, with all necessary information passed on to keep everyone safe.

Final Checks Before Distribution

Before food leaves your site, always confirm:

- Temperature safety: Frozen food is still hard-frozen; chilled food is at or below 5 degrees C.
- No spoilage or damage: Check for mould, leaks, bulging packaging, or signs of contamination.
- Accurate information: Pass on donor instructions, allergen details, special storage or handling notes, and any shelf-life limitations.
- Clear labelling: Ensure items requiring special handling (for example, frozen meat, allergen separation) are clearly marked.

Think of this as the last opportunity to catch a risk before kai reaches the community.

Handling Recalls

- Stop distribution immediately and set aside any affected kai or products.
- Notify recipients quickly using phone calls, emails, signage at collection points, or social media.
- Follow instructions from MPI or the donor. In some cases, recalled food can be redistributed safely with corrected labelling, for example updated allergen warnings.
- Keep records of when and how recall actions were taken.

Subscribing to MPI recall alerts ensures your Food Safety Leader is always up to date:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-recalls-and-complaints/recalled-food-products/>

9

Keeping Records

Good record-keeping is an essential part of food safety. Records show that your organisation is following safe practices, helps identify problems quickly, and protects you if something goes wrong. They are also a key part of AFRA's impact reporting.

What to Record

- **Training:** Logs of staff and volunteer food safety training, including induction and refreshers.
- **Sickness:** Records of staff or volunteer sickness periods.
- **Cleaning:** Cleaning schedules and checklists covering what was cleaned, when, and by whom.
- **Temperature control:** Daily checks of fridges, freezers, and cool rooms. Note any issues and corrective actions taken.
- **Food weights:** A record of incoming and outgoing kai by category, measured in kilograms.
- **Incidents:** A register of issues such as spills, near misses, recalls, and food discarded due to temperature breach.
- **Maintenance:** Notes on equipment servicing, for example, fridge thermometer recalibration and repairs.

How Long to Keep Records

Keep all records for at least four years. This is AFRA's recommended best practice and aligns with general limitation periods under New Zealand law, ensuring you can respond to any future queries or audits.

Why Records Matter

- **Protection:** If food safety is questioned, records demonstrate that you followed correct procedures.
- **Improvement:** Regularly reviewing logs helps spot patterns, for example, repeated fridge faults or frequent recalls.
- **Impact:** Food weights and reporting demonstrate your organisation's contribution to reducing food waste and feeding communities.

Record-keeping templates: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/16717-food-business->

AFRA BEST BEFORE GUIDELINES

Understanding date marks

Best-before dates indicate how long a product is expected to remain at its best quality. Food past its best-before date is generally still safe to eat, although taste, texture, or appearance may decline. If there are clear signs of spoilage, the food should not be consumed.

As a practical guide: if it looks and smells fine, it is usually safe. It is not illegal to sell or donate food past its best-before date.

For more information on understanding date marks, see Consumer NZ's guide:

<https://www.consumer.org.nz/articles/use-by-dates-on-food>

Important: Never distribute or eat food that has passed its use-by date. The use-by date is a safety limit, not a quality limit.

A note on freezing: Products can be frozen on or before their best-before date to extend shelf life. Imported items or those that have been previously frozen must not be refrozen.

Category	Product	Redistribute within...
Dairy	Fresh milk and cream	5 days of best-before date
	Yoghurt, sour cream, cottage cheese	1 week of best-before date
	Eggs (clean, intact, properly stored)	2 weeks of best-before date
	Soft cheese (brie, camembert)	2 weeks of best-before date
	Hard cheese	3 weeks of best-before date
	Mayonnaise, hollandaise, tartare sauce	1 month of best-before date
Meat	Fresh or cured meat (not shellfish)	On or before best-before date only - freeze immediately or distribute same day
Bread	Fresh bread	2 days of best-before date
	Packaged breads	10 days of best-before date
Drinks (unopened)	Smoothies (pasteurised)	2 days of best-before date
	Juices	1 week of best-before date
	Fizzy drinks	6 months of best-before date

Food Type	Product	Redistribute...
Ready meals	Salads (bags and pottles)	On or before best-before date only
	Single-serve or bulk prepared meals	On or before best-before date only
	Fresh pies, pizzas, quiches (no chicken or seafood)	3 days of best-before date - AFRA operational guideline, not a food safety standard
	Fresh soups (plastic pouches)	2 weeks of best-before date
Other	Tofu	1 week of best-before date
	Dips including hummus	1 week of best-before date
	Packaged chips, biscuits, crackers	1 month of best-before date
	Chocolate and sweets	2 months of best-before date
	Dried nuts and fruits	3 months of best-before date
	Packaged cereals and muesli bars	6 months of best-before date
	Spreads and chutneys	6 months of best-before date
	Canned goods	1 year of best-before date
	Dried bulk goods (flour, sugar, oats, etc.)	1 year of best-before date

About these guidelines

These guidelines are based on information originally collated from the international reference resource www.eatbydate.com, which aggregates data from food safety authorities and manufacturers worldwide. The guidelines have been reviewed and endorsed by AFRA members based on their practical experience in food rescue, and represent AFRA's recommended operational practice for the redistribution of food past its best-before date.

These are guidelines only. They are not derived from MPI regulations. You should always use your judgement when assessing food past its best-before date. If in doubt, do not give it out.

APPENDIX

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES



11. Appendix - Useful Links and Resources

The following sources are referenced throughout this document. Both NZ government sources and Consumer NZ are considered reliable reference points for food safety information in Aotearoa New Zealand.

NZ Government sources

- MPI: Donations of food from commercial sources - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/3783-Donations-of-food-from-commercial-sources>
- MPI: Food safety in natural disasters and emergencies - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-safety-in-natural-disasters-and-emergencies>
- MPI: Handling eggs - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1216/direct/>
- MPI: Pest control guidance - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/21272/direct/>
- MPI: Advice on homekill and wild catch - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-safety-tips-fishing-hunting-homekill>
- MPI: Record keeping templates - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/16717-food-business->
- MPI: Recalled food products and alerts - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-recalls-and-complaints/recalled-food-products/>
- MPI: Allergen labelling guidance - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/labelling-composition-food-drinks/allergen-declarations-warnings-and-advisory-statements-on-food-labels>
- MPI: Fundraising and community event food safety rules - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/starting-a-food-business/exemptions-from-the-food-act/fundraising-and-community-event-food-safety-rules>
- MPI: Marae food safety requirements - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/starting-a-food-business/exemptions-from-the-food-act/marae-food-safety-requirements>
- MPI: My Food Rules tool - <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-business/food-safety-rules>
- Food Act 2014, Section 352 (Good Samaritan Clause) - <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0032/latest/DLM5431609.html>
- Food Act 2014, Section 13 (Meaning of sale) - <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0032/latest/DLM2996093.html>

Consumer NZ

- Consumer NZ: Best-before vs use-by dates - <https://www.consumer.org.nz/articles/use-by-dates-on-food>

POWER CUT - KAI SAFETY QUICK REFERENCE

PRINT THIS PAGE AND ATTACH IT NEAR YOUR FRIDGE OR FREEZER



FRIDGE / CHILLER

Doors closed: stays safe for 2 to 4 hours
At 2 hours: check internal temperature
Above 5 degrees C: 4-hour countdown begins for perishable food.

- Above 5 degrees C for 4+ hours: discard raw meat, dairy, cooked meals, seafood.

FREEZER

Full freezer, doors closed: safe for up to 48 hours
Half-full freezer, doors closed: safe for up to 24 hours
Still has ice crystals: may be safe - can be refrozen (quality may suffer)

- Fully thawed: do NOT refreeze - move to fridge and use promptly or discard.

DURING A POWER CUT - DO THIS:

1. Note the time the power went off: _____
2. Keep all fridge and freezer doors CLOSED
3. Monitor temperature with a probe or remote sensor without opening doors where possible
4. If the outage is prolonged, move high-risk kai into insulated containers with ice packs
5. Record all temperatures and actions taken
6. NEVER taste food to check if it is safe
7. When in doubt, throw it out

DO YOU HAVE KAI THAT NEEDS TO BE RESCUED URGENTLY?

If you have safe food that needs to be moved quickly due to a power cut or equipment failure, contact your local food rescue organisation:

Organisation name: _____

Contact name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Best time to call: _____

Food rescue organisations may be able to collect and redistribute kai quickly if it is still safe. Please have ready: the type and quantity of kai, current temperature, and time since the power cut began.