



Food Safety Survey Report

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**Government
of South Australia**

SA Health

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Microbiological Integrity of Sprouted Seeds

Author: Garry Clarke – Environmental Health Officer

A survey to monitor the bacterial load of sprouted seeds sold in South Australia food businesses

Aim and Scope of the Investigation

The purpose of this survey was to determine the microbiological integrity of sprouted seeds available at retail outlets to determine if they are safe and suitable for sale and consumption.

Background of the Survey

In April 2016 there was an outbreak of *Salmonella Saintpaul* in South Australia and mung bean sprouts were identified as the most common food source connected to the outbreak. A joint inspection by Biosecurity SA and SA Health of two mung bean manufacturers and the taking of many samples produced a positive result to *Salmonella Saintpaul* in one of the businesses. The business involved was served with an emergency order to cease production of mung bean sprouts and initiate a national recall. The order also required the company to carry out improvements to the infrastructure of their production area and for staff to undertake food handling training.

As a result of this outbreak and the results of the inspection of the manufacturing premises it was decided that shortly after the company recommence manufacturing their product, a follow up survey of sprouted seed from all manufacturers selling sprouted seed in South Australia would be undertaken.

The service of local councils was sought and 6 councils agreed to collect samples on behalf of SA Health and submit them for analysis to the SA Pathology Food and Environmental Laboratory. This was to be done over a period of three months to collect samples with a wide representation of use by dates.

Mount Barker District Council, City of Salisbury, Holdfast Bay Council, City of Adelaide, City of West Torrens and City of Onkaparinga participated in the program were provided with necessary resources like sampling forms, Ziplock bags, Labels/marker pens, Eskey, Ice bricks and gloves to carry out the survey. SA Health also collected a number of samples as part of the survey.

Standards

The Food Act 2001 requires food businesses to sell food that is safe and suitable for human consumption.

What foods were tested?

A total of 291 samples of packaged RTE sprouted seeds were collected from 22 retail outlets including supermarket and fruit and vegetable stores around the metropolitan area by council Environmental Health Officers. The type of sprouts sampled and the number of samples collected are included in Table 1.

Table 1.

TYPE	Number of samples
Mung Beans Sprouts	178
Sprouts	20
Alfalfa & Garlic	8
Alfalfa & Radish	8
Alfalfa & Onion	5
Alfalfa	17
Green Alfalfa	6
White Alfalfa	6
Salad Mix	7
Snow Peas	27
Mung Bean/Chick Pea/ Lentils	2
Crunchy Combo	1
Gourmet Mix	6

What did we test for?

All food samples were sent to the SA Pathology Food and Environmental Laboratory in Adelaide for analysis. Samples were analysed for *Salmonella*.

Results

From the 291 samples collected over a 3 months period none of the samples tested positive to the presence of *Salmonella*.

Conclusion

As a result of the 100% compliance rate of the survey no follow up action was required.