

The Verification of a Food Control Plan

Food Act 2014

What Does Verification Mean?

- “Verification” is the term used to check the Food Control Plan (FCP) is accurately tailored.
- A “reality check” of the business is also undertaken at this time.
- Verification is different from inspection, you tell us, not we tell you how to operate.
- Verification is made by appointment, not by surprise.
- The verification process will provide food business guidance on “opportunities for improvement”.

The Verification Process

- Your first verification will take place within one month of receiving your completed FCP and application.
- An appointment will be made with you at your business.
- The first Verification will take 1-2 hours, and will verify every template completed in the FCP.
- A reality check of food preparation areas will be undertaken at this time.
- You may be asked if it is possible to chat with staff members from time to time.
- Frequency of Verification will depend on how well you operate.

What Can I Expect

- Verification is a semi-formal process that will begin with an entry meeting.
- The scope is pre determined before the meeting, this is confirmed at the meeting.
- You will need your FCP and all records requested.
- You will be advised of the process for Corrective Action Requests, and Recommendations.
- Any issues Identified will be discussed at the time “No Surprises.”

The Verification

- The Verifier will ask a range of questions during the verification.
- The questions used are intended to understand your business as much as possible.
- The Verifier will actively listen to your answers to assess compliance with the Food Control Plan.
- Notes will be taken during the verification process, you are welcome to request to see these notes.
- The notes will form the base of the Verification Report, and will contain any recommendations or CAR's identified.

What is a Recommendation?

- A recommendation is given where there has been an area for improvement identified.
- Areas for improvement are non critical to food safety.
- Areas for Improvement are recorded as a Strong Recommendation or Recommendation in the Verification report.
- You will generally be given until the next verification to address these areas identified.
- If they have not been addressed by this time and are ongoing, you may be issued a Corrective Action Request (CAR).
- Verification uses a graduated enforcement approach to improve operational issues.

What is a Corrective Action Request?

- A Corrective Action Request (CAR) is given when there is a serious or ongoing problem that has been identified.
- The time frame for completing (Closing Out) a CAR is agreed with you at the time of the verification.
- The more serious the problem the less time will be suggested.
- You may be instructed to fix it immediately if it is an issue to food safety, or be issued an Improvement Notice.

What is an Improvement Notice?

- An Improvement Notice is a tool used for serious or ongoing non compliance.
- If you are issued with an improvement notice it is likely that your activity poses a serious threat to food safety.
- An Improvement Notice is the last resort used by a Food Safety Officer under the Food Act 2014.
- An Improvement Notice will add additional charges to the cost of running your business.

How often will I be Verified?

- The frequency of verification is set in the Food Act Regulations.
- The sliding scale ranges from every 3 months – to every 18 Months.
- More frequent verifications are for businesses who are not managing their food safety responsibilities well.
- Frequent Verifications are likely to be partial verifications.
- Less frequent Verifications are for businesses that have demonstrated that they manage their responsibilities well.

The better you operate, the less it will cost!

Additional Information

Contact the Tararua District Council if you would like to know more about verification or think that you might be ready to operate a Food Control Plan.

Ministry for Primary Industries

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/food-act-2014/>