

# Egg stamping for egg producers

Information for egg producers regarding the new requirement for mandatory egg stamping which comes into effect on 26 November 2014.

## Mandatory egg stamping starts on 26 November 2014... are you ready?

Eggs are one of the leading sources of *salmonella*, and in NSW, between 2010 and 2014 there were 40 food poisoning outbreaks linked to eggs, affecting more than 700 people, with many hospitalisations.

Contamination is frequently caused by poor handling during food preparation however due to the vast increase in *salmonella* incidents over recent years the Food Authority is targeting the risk from egg-related *salmonella* throughout the food chain – on the egg farm, during egg grading and processing, through labelling and transport, as well as at the retail and consumer level.

In the event of an outbreak, tracing the egg back to the farm can be an issue. Egg stamping was introduced to combat this issue and improve traceability.

When trace back is possible, the farm would be assessed to see if it is taking all necessary steps to minimise the prevalence of pathogens on eggs from a grading facility.

As part of the national standard for eggs, which commenced on 26 November 2012, there was a requirement to uniquely identify (stamp) individual eggs and packages of egg pulp for sale, so they can be traced back to the place of production.

After much consultation with industry, the NSW Food Authority (the Food Authority) delayed this requirement for two years to allow all egg businesses the time to budget for and install stamping equipment.

From 26 November 2014, all egg producers (licensed and unlicensed) that sell eggs in NSW are to meet this requirement (Standard 4.2.5 – *Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg products in NSW*).

## Why do I need to stamp my eggs?

- Traceability in the event of a food borne illness outbreak.
- *Salmonella* is the second most reported foodborne illness in Australia and eggs are one of the leading sources of it. In the event of an outbreak, tracing a contaminated egg back to the farm or the processor can be extremely difficult.
- Stamping individual eggs and by-products (not egg cartons) improves traceability and ultimately, protects consumers from major *salmonella* outbreaks. It enables any eggs implicated in a foodborne illness incident to be quickly identified, recalled if necessary, and checked for compliance issues to prevent the further release of contaminated eggs.
- Traceability also delivers significant benefits to the egg industry. Any delay in identifying the source of contamination is at significant cost to egg producers, in terms of loss of consumer confidence as well as in the potential of having to withdraw even safe products from the market.

## How do I stamp my eggs

The Food Authority requires only that each producer's or processor's stamp is unique. Hand stamps distributed to small producers are pre-assigned with a six digit code with the letters

NSW followed by three numeric symbols (e.g. NSW123). Other farmers have designed their own with unique branding and symbols.

There are no required images or lettering, only that the stamp is unique, allowing eggs to be traced to the farm gate or processor.

Contact the Food Authority to see which designs are currently in use.

## Are you a small egg business?

Even if you sell eggs at the farmers market, to the grocer or butcher you still need to meet the egg stamping requirement.

For egg businesses that produce less than 1,000 eggs a day, the NSW Food Authority can provide you with a free manual egg stamp to ensure you meet this requirement.

## More information

If you have any questions about the commencement of the requirement or you wish to order a free manual egg stamp:

- Call the helpline on 1300 552 406
- Visit the NSW Food Authority website at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- For the Egg Food Safety Scheme visit: [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/industry-sector-requirements/eggs/](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/industry-sector-requirements/eggs/)

**About the NSW Food Authority:** The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

**Note:** This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).