The Rare Burger Issue

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Presented by:

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Background

- Emerging Trend

- Industry resistance from regulation/lack of understanding of risk.

- Emerging Public Health Risk going unregulated (strongly influenced by USA and Europe dining habits.)
Actual Risk

Microbiological risk from inadequate cooking –

• E. Coli
• Salmonella

What we need to remember:
Safety of product cannot be guaranteed without surface treatment prior to mincing.
Food Standards Code 3.2.2 Clause 7 Food Processing:

A food business must use a process step that is reasonably known to achieve the microbiological safety of the food.

• NSW FA advice: Minced meat should be cooked right through to the centre. No pink should be visible and juices should run clear. Some guidelines suggest cooking hamburgers until the thermometer reads at least 71°C internal temperature. Keep raw minced meat cold (4°C or lower) and cook within no more than two days after purchasing.
Enforcement options:-

• Improvement notice

• Prohibition Order

Each incidence of lightly cooked burgers should be assessed on a case by case basis and will hinge on the Officers professional judgement and findings at the time of inspection.
Action to date:-

• Rare Burger Guidance

• Internal training of officers.

• Liaison with NSW FA.

• Highlighting possible alternative approved methods.
Possible Alternative treatment to reduce surface contamination :-

1. Sear and shave method  
2. Lactic acid bath  
3. Irradiation of meat  
4. Sous vide cooking

• All the above methods rely on hygienic handling and proper sterilisation of equipment to ensure no recontamination following treatment.
What the city expects:-

• Scores on Doors - 4* or 5* Premises.
• Good standard of cleaning, use of commercial food grade sanitiser, cross contamination control.
• Good compliance history.
• Demonstrate high level of understanding of the risks associated with lightly cooked burgers (all food handlers.)

On site requirements

• Written procedures in place.
• Adequate documentation.
• Evidence of approval for alternative methods of compliance.

EHO must be satisfied that the food business can consistently maintain safe standards day in and day out to safely carry out this complex process.
Other factors to Consider:-

- Reputable supplier?
- Quality of meat (cut, specification etc.)
- Where are they minced?
- When are the patties minced?
- Is raw egg being used to bind the burger?
- Maintenance of cold chain when processing.
- Where staff are measuring the temp of the burger?
- Have burgers been previously frozen?
Common misconceptions:-

• If the customer signs a waiver the business is absolved of any liability.

• If a warning is provided at the point of sale/on the menu customers have made an informed decision to consume rare burgers.

• HACCP approved suppliers – does not guarantee that the meat is pathogen free.

• Challenge Testing is a sufficient control.
Case Study - Sous Vide Cooking method

• Busy CBD Premises found to be serving lightly cooked burgers.

• Wished to continue to serve lightly cooked burgers as they were selling 3,000 burgers per week/significant proportion of their business.

• Premises proposed burgers are cooked via Sous vide method – method approved by NSW FA.

• 4* rated premises, good compliance history.

• Generic Food Safety Management System was in place.
Case Study - Sous Vide method Cont’d

Sous vide controls:

• NSW FA Sous Vide Guidance - Critical Control Point 55°C for 69 minutes is a validated cook time (i.e. 5log reduction) under the NSW Food Authority Sous vide guidance and will therefore not be required to be validated by the NSW Food Authority.

• The business set the temperature of the water bath at 57°C to achieve a core temperature of 55°C for 69 minutes.

• The “coming up” time of the burgers was identified as a critical control.

• Practical controls

• Verification checks
Looking to the Future

- Rare burger working group.
- Produce specific state wide guidance.
- A range of accepted Alternative solutions provided by the Food Authority.
- Food Safety Management system template for businesses.
- Other rare meat dishes.
We don’t have all the answers but......
Any Questions?