

Food safety

Rockmelon safety for food businesses

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Fresh fruit and vegetables are an important part of a healthy and nutritious diet. However, like many other foods, fresh fruit, including rockmelons, can be hazardous if not prepared or stored properly.

This fact sheet explains the safe food handling practices that food retailers need to follow when receiving, storing, and preparing rockmelon.



Display pre-cut rockmelon under refrigeration at 5°C or below

In recent years several serious foodborne illness outbreaks, involving bacterial pathogens such as *Listeria* and *Salmonella*, have been associated with rockmelon.

Bacteria are naturally found in soil and can transfer to the rockmelon skin, as they grow on the soil.

The skin of rockmelon has a net-like texture with grooves, making it difficult to clean. A small number of bacteria may multiply in rockmelons if present.

Everybody is at risk of foodborne illness; however *Listeria* and *Salmonella* may cause very serious illnesses in vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, babies, the elderly and people with reduced immunity. Among these groups, the illness can be severe and life threatening.



Your legal obligations

As a food retailer, you have an obligation under the *Food Act 2006* and the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* to ensure the rockmelons you sell are safe and suitable for human consumption. You are responsible for ensuring all employees have the skills and knowledge required to handle food safely.

Safe food handling practices described below should be followed to ensure that employees who handle rockmelons minimise the food safety risks.

Employees suffering from a disease or illness are at risk of contaminating food, should not be permitted to handle food.

In the instance of a foodborne illness outbreak, records of, packaging and supplier (e.g. grower's name and address, date harvested, lot identification), may help to isolate the source of contamination.



Keep records for traceability
You should keep a record of sale including, dates, quantities and place of sale. Record keeping helps with tracing the source of an foodborne illness outbreak.

Check



Rockmelons should be handled carefully.

When receiving rockmelons, check the cleanliness of the food transport vehicle. Reject if the rockmelon skin is damaged as this may allow bacteria to enter the flesh.

If there are any noticeable signs of decay, bruising or damage (e.g. cracked skin), the rockmelon should be discarded due to the increased risk of cross-contamination.

Clean



Wash hands before and after handling rockmelons

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling rockmelon.
- Ensure all food-contact equipment and utensils such as cutting boards, knives and benches, are thoroughly cleaned with hot soapy water, rinsed and sanitised, after coming into contact with rockmelons.
- Equipment and containers should be able to be cleaned, sanitised and maintained to avoid the risks of cross-contamination.
- Cutting knives and utensils should be kept in a good condition.



Storage

When displaying whole or pre-cut rockmelon ensure rockmelon does not come into contact with other foods or equipment, to minimise the risk of cross-contamination.

- Areas used for storing or preparing rockmelon should be designed, constructed and maintained in a way to avoid the risk of cross-contamination.
- Pre-cut rockmelon should be wrapped and packaged to avoid cross-contamination and kept at 5°C or below.
- Consumer handling information should provide specific directions for storage and use, including a 'use-by' date. For example, "refrigerated at 5°C or below."

Cutting or slicing rockmelon



When cutting rockmelon, it's important to remember that bacteria can be introduced into the flesh and cross-contamination of surfaces and other food can occur.

- Cut small batches frequently rather than storing large batches for longer.
- Maintain the temperature of pre-cut rockmelon at 5°C or below to reduce the rate at which the bacteria grows.

Cut melons may be displayed for a maximum of two hours without temperature control and if not sold, must be discarded.



Further information

Contact your local government.

Contact details can be found at

www.qld.gov.au/about/how-government-works/local-government-directory

