



# FOOD COMPLAINTS GUIDANCE



This leaflet provides information on the food complaints we deal with and how we investigate them.

### **What is a food complaint?**

Things can go wrong in even the best run businesses, resulting in the food you've bought having an "added extra" that you just hadn't expected. Food with foreign bodies, mould, insects, unusual tastes or odours can sometimes give cause for concern.

### **What we can investigate**

The Food and Safety Division deals with complaints about food that is unfit to eat, injurious to health or contaminated with foreign matter.

The Trading Standards Division deal with complaints about food that is not of the substance, nature and quality it should be.

### **Why we investigate food complaints**

We investigate food complaints in order to safeguard public health by trying to prevent the problem happening again.

We also assess whether there has been a breach of food safety legislation.

The purpose of our investigation is not to obtain compensation for you. We may, however, be able to advise you should you wish to take the matter further yourself.

If you think that the food has made you ill, contact your doctor for medical advice. If you work with food and you are ill you must tell your employer.

### **How we investigate complaints**

If the food was bought in Swansea, then the department will investigate your food complaint no matter where you live. If your purchase was made elsewhere in the UK, arrangements can be made to transfer your complaint to the appropriate local authority.

We will examine the food or foreign body to try to determine exactly what the problem is, and try to establish where it arose. This may involve sending the food to an independent laboratory for testing to be carried out.

The premises where the food was bought may be contacted or visited to see if any similar food is on sale and if the food is properly stored and handled.

The manufacturers and suppliers of food may be contacted and asked to comment on the complaint.

We may also contact the food officers at the council in the manufacturer's area to give an independent view of food hygiene standards and discuss with them how the problem might have occurred.

If we can prove beyond all reasonable doubt how and why the problem occurred and a breach of food hygiene legislation has taken place, we will consider taking formal action. This may involve giving a warning or taking legal proceedings.

The Food Safety Act 1990 provides that a person who can prove that he took all reasonable precautions and exercised 'due diligence' to avoid committing an offence, can have a defence against prosecution.

Some complaints are dealt with by informal action. This is likely where there was a 'one off' problem which was unavoidable in an otherwise well run business and where improvements are made quickly to avoid similar problems occurring again.

You will be kept informed of the outcome of the investigation and action taken.

### **How you can help**

- With transparent containers such as a glass jar or a plastic bag, a foreign body may be visible within the food before you open the container. In this case DO NOT OPEN the container. Removing the foreign body might destroy evidence.

- You may only become aware of a problem when you unwrap the food or even whilst eating it! It is important that you keep all the food, not just the foreign body. Place it in a suitable container e.g. a plastic bag or an airtight sandwich box and keep it in your fridge, taking care to place it where it can not drip or come into contact with other foods. If the foreign body is embedded in the food e.g. an insect in a slice of bread, do not try to remove it.
- Keep all the packaging, including the lids of cans, tops of packets etc., and the receipt if at all possible. They may be needed to identify the factory where the food was manufactured, or the date and time of manufacture.
- Remember - How the food was handled in the early stages of an investigation can affect certain tests which may need to be carried out. Do not handle the food more than necessary, and never touch a foreign body or dislodge it from the surrounding food.

### **How to Contact Us:**

You can contact food officers or trading standards officers by telephoning the Environment Call Centre on 01792 635600 (Monday-Thursday 8.30am-5.00pm, Friday 8.30am-4.30pm).

Email: [evh@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:evh@swansea.gov.uk)

Post: Food & Safety Division/ Trading Standards Division  
Housing & Public Protection Service  
Directorate of Place  
Civic Centre  
Oystermouth Road  
Swansea  
SA1 3SN

Please ring before bringing your food complaint to us, as officers are not based at the Civic Centre. An officer will return your call, to discuss the complaint further and advise you on the most appropriate course of action.

If you would like this leaflet in Braille or large print please contact us using the details above.

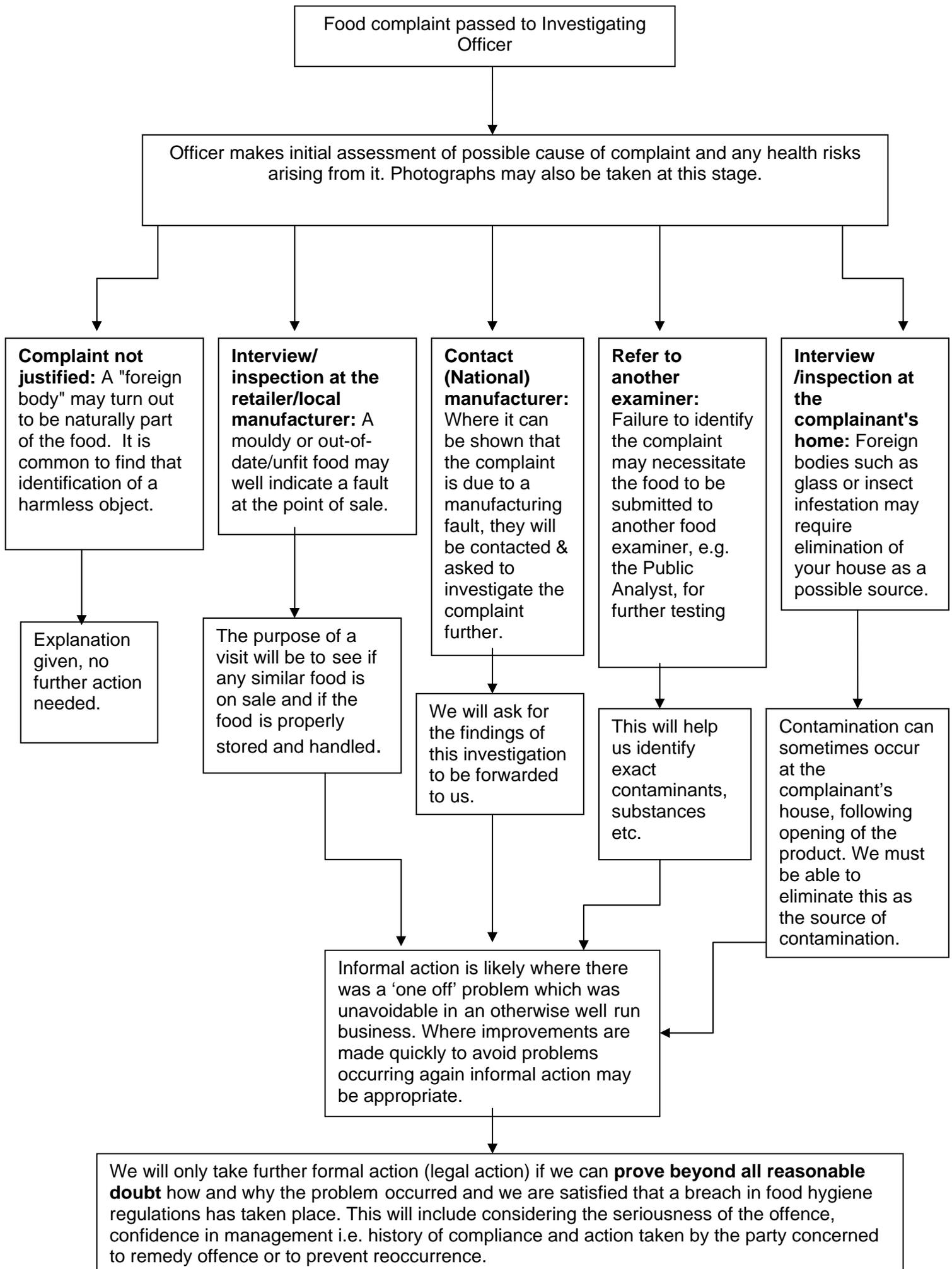
## **Common Food Complaints**

Many complaints where there is no risk to health can be resolved quickly by providing advice.

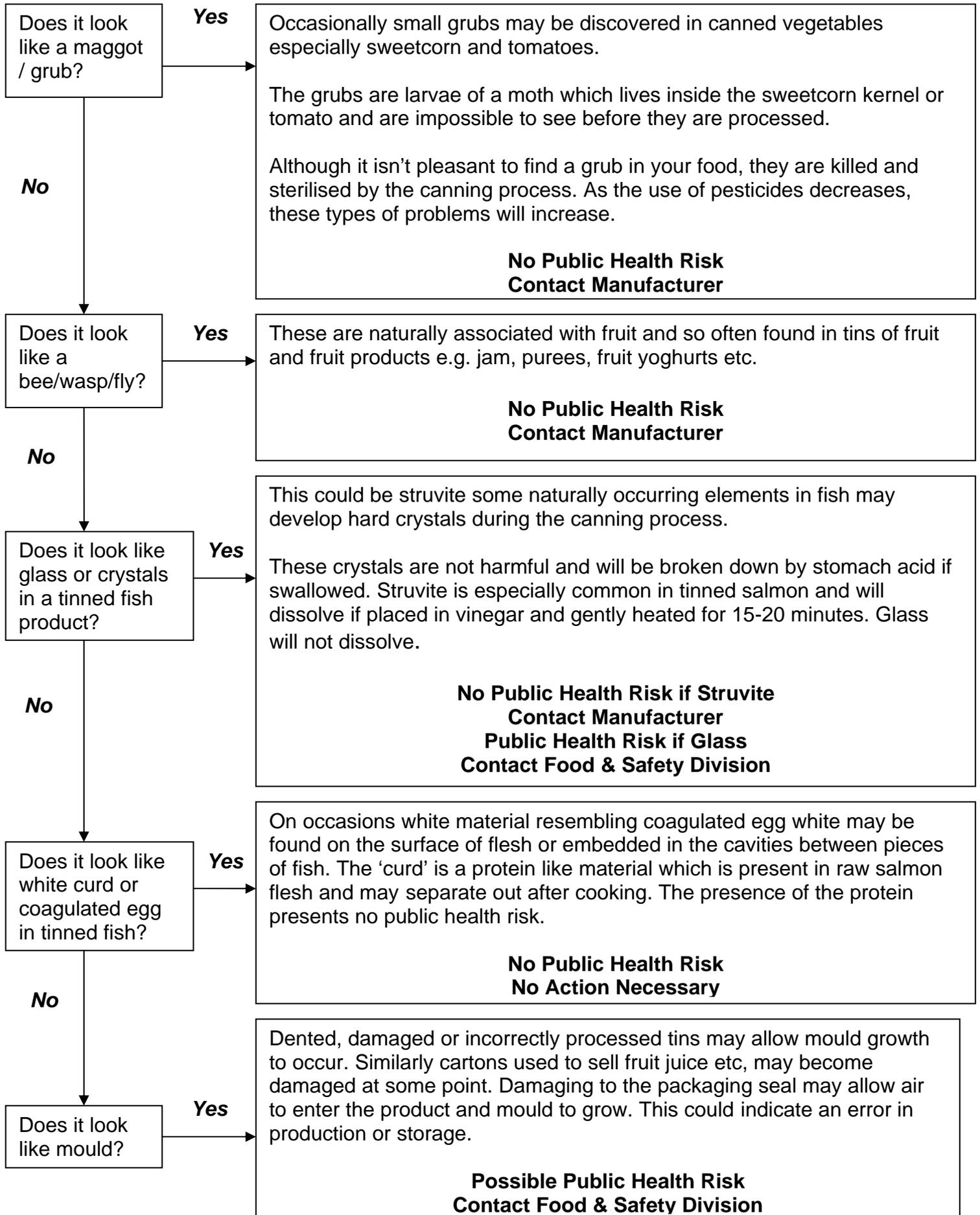
Included in this guidance are flow diagrams of some common food complaints together with a short explanation and suggestions for the best course of action.

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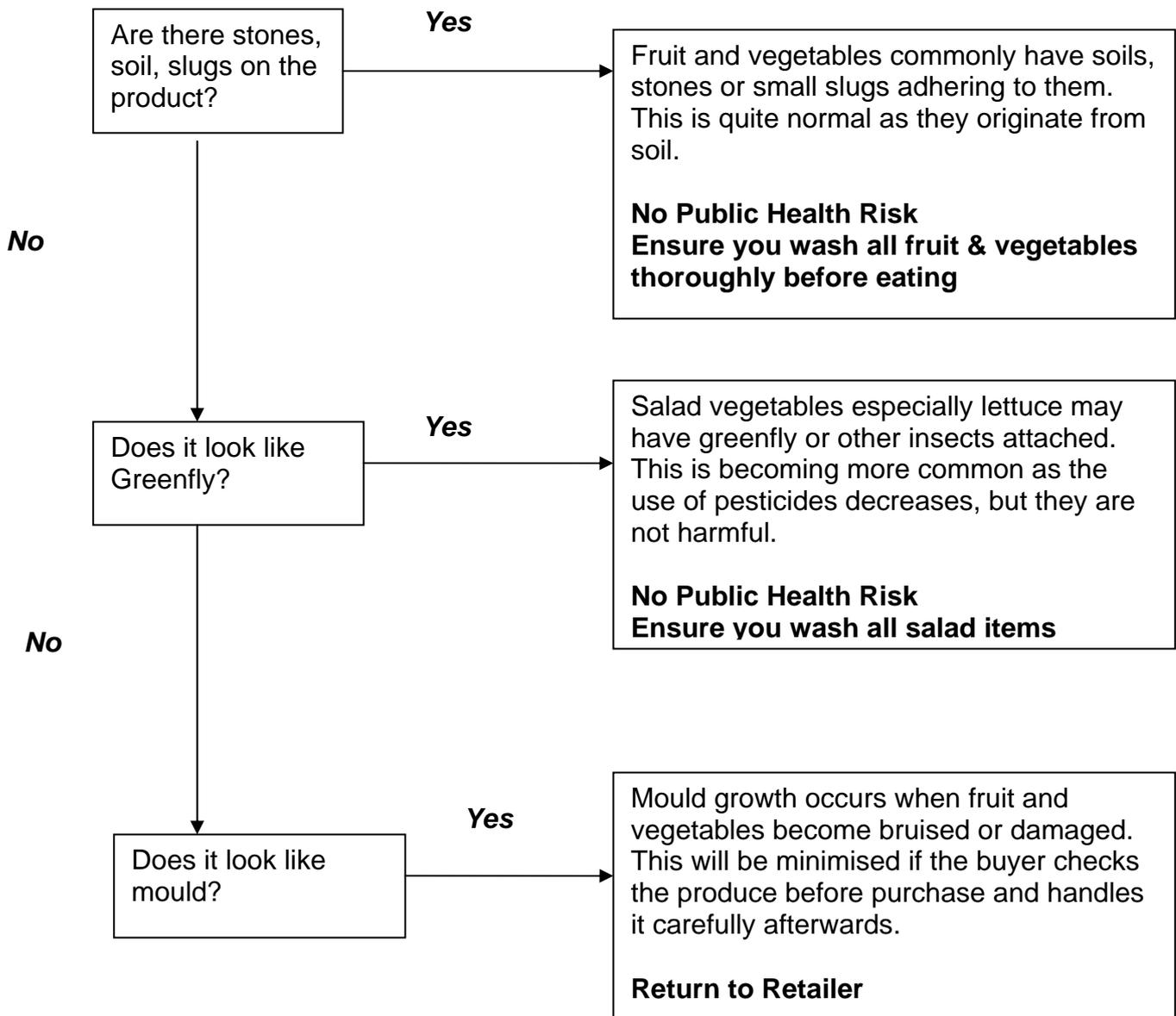
# Investigating a Complaint



## TABLE 1: TINNED FOODS & JARS



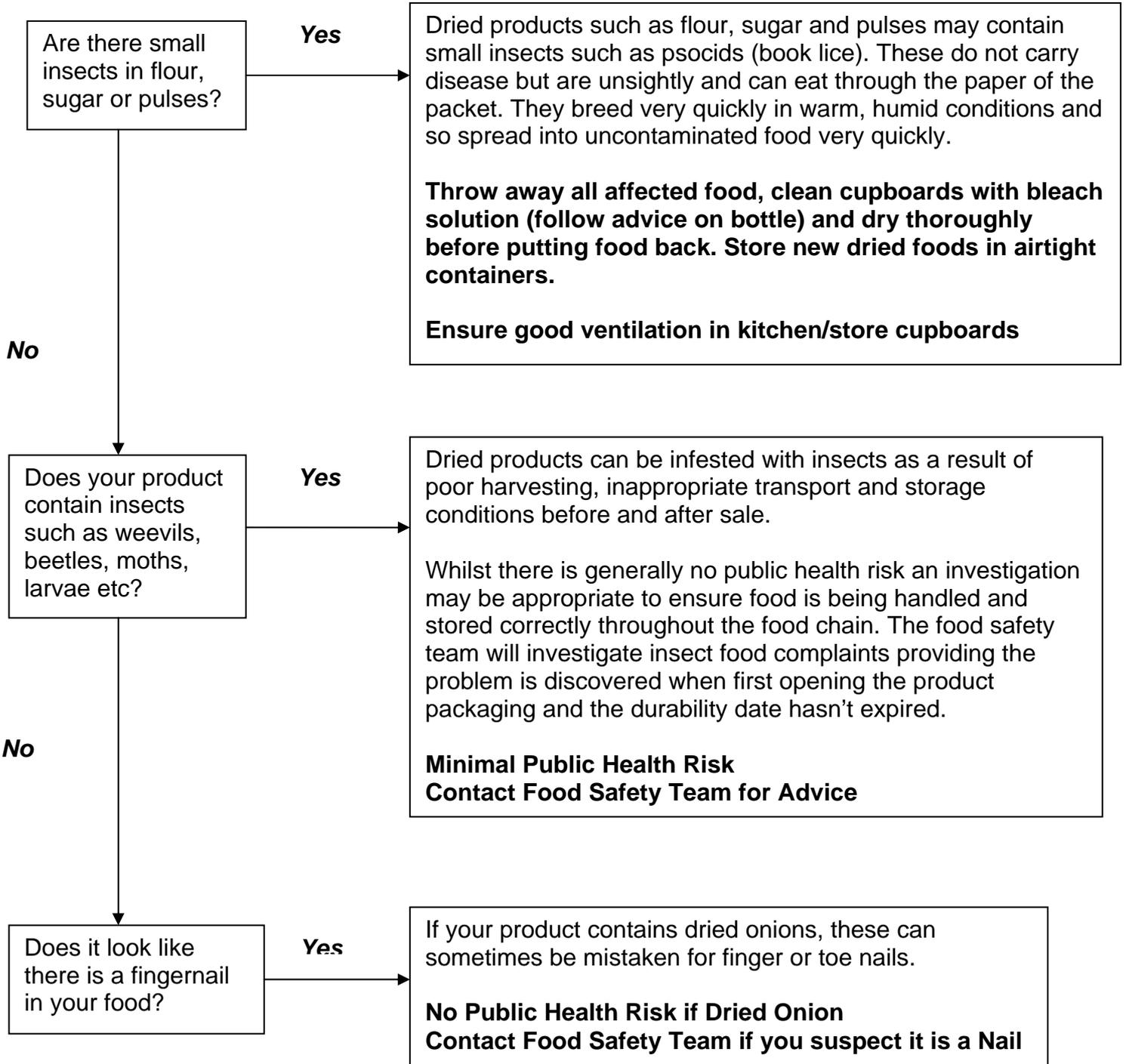
**TABLE 2: FRUIT AND VEGETABLES- FRESH/FROZEN**



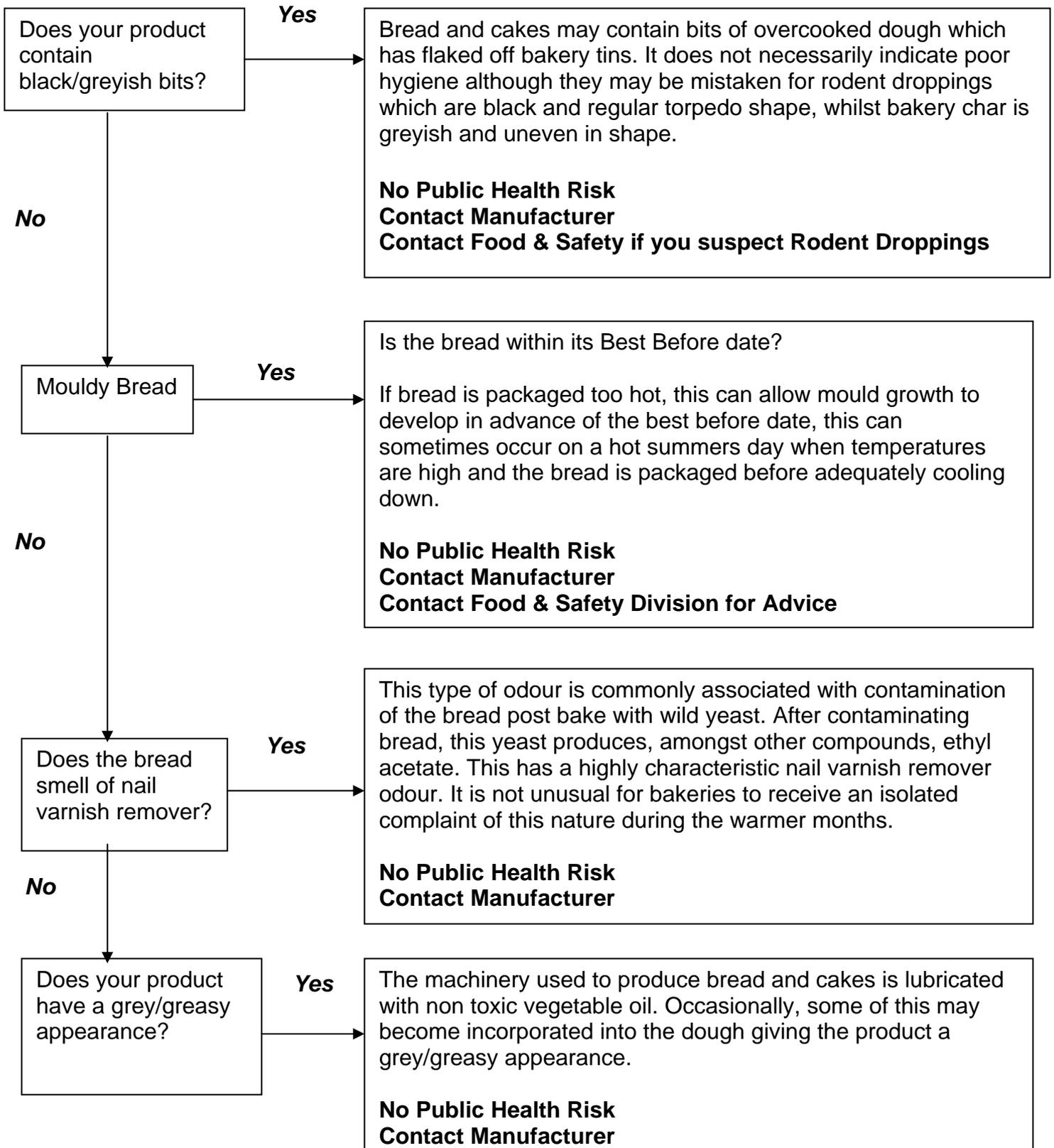
## TABLE 3: DRIED FOODS



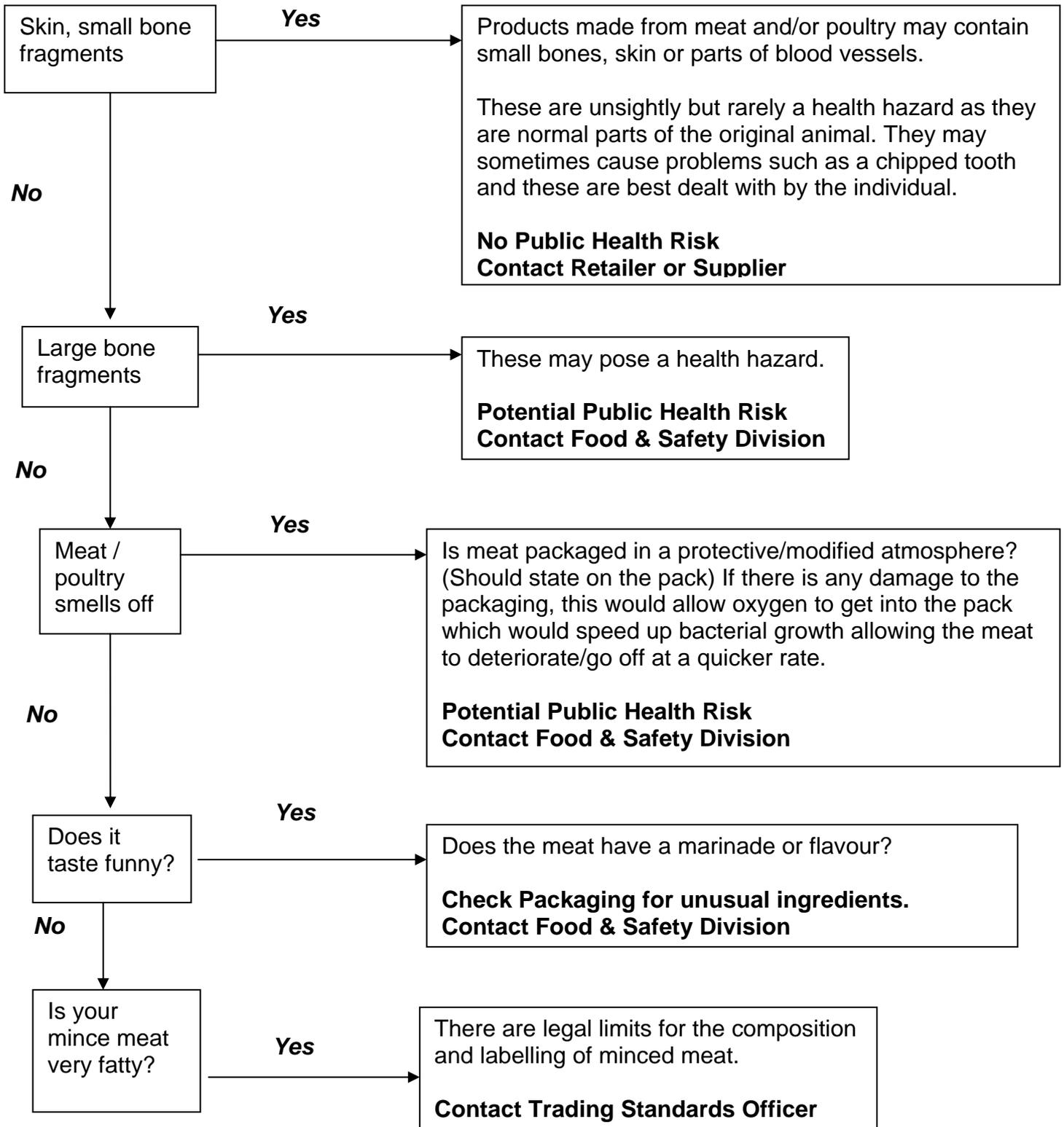
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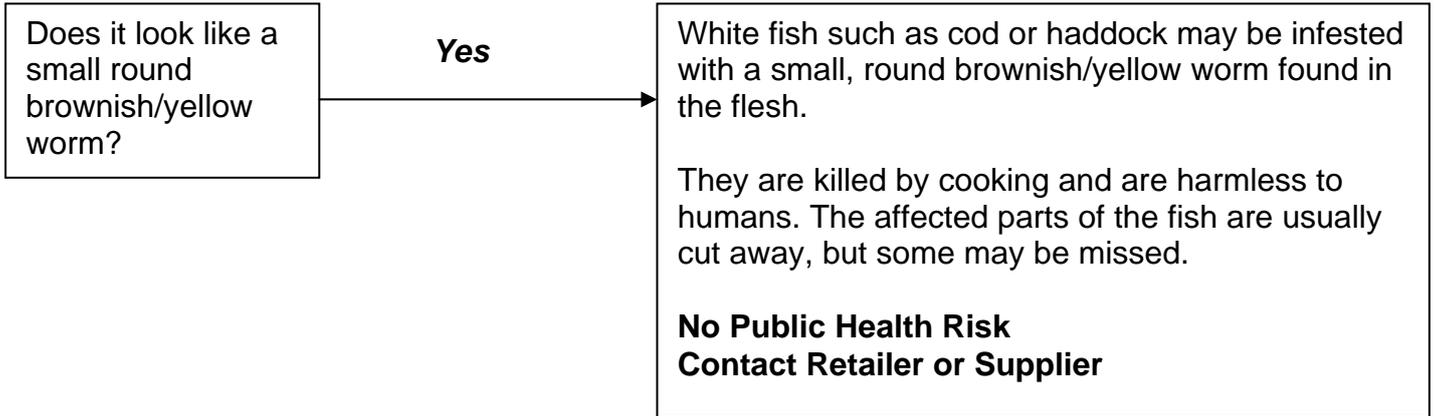
## TABLE 4: BAKERY GOODS



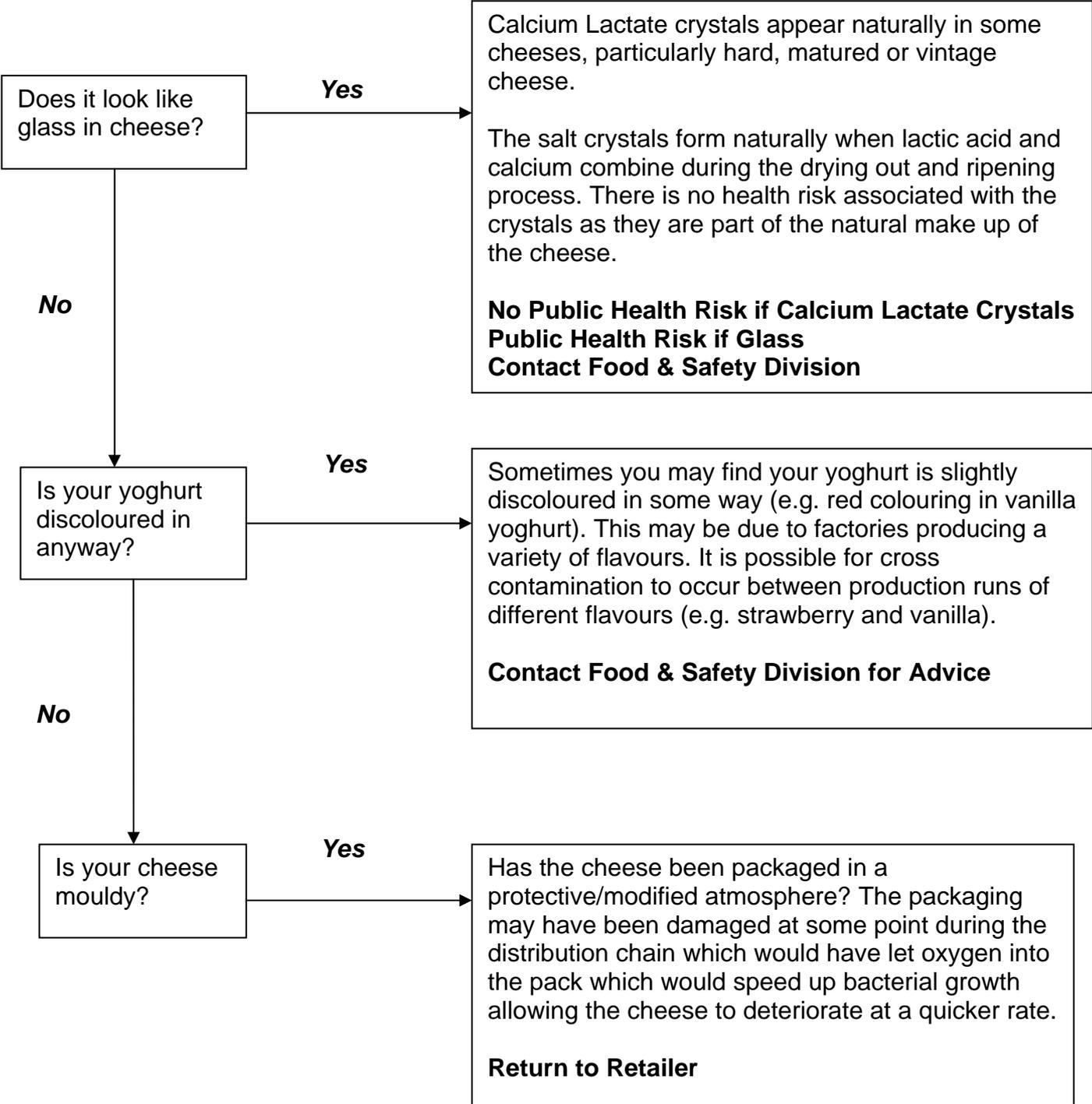
## TABLE 5: MEAT AND POULTRY



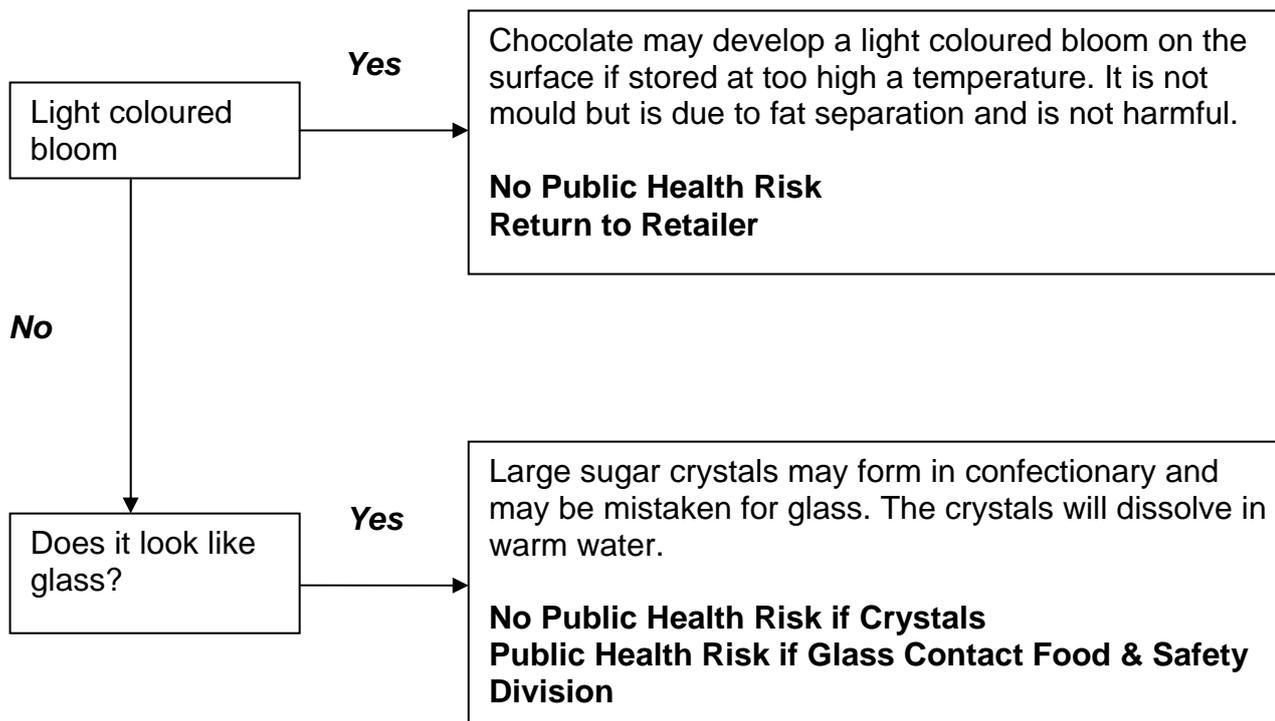
## TABLE 6: FRESH/FROZEN FISH



**TABLE 7: DAIRY PRODUCTS**



## **TABLE 8: CHOCOLATE/CONFECTIONARY**



## **TABLE 9: MISCELLANEOUS**

