



## This edition of the PrimeSafe eNews covers:

- Maintaining food safety during COVID-19
- Licensee survey feedback
- About Food Safety Programs
- VFA Small Sale Wildcatch Trial



## Maintaining Food Safety During COVID-19

As we continue to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, we must all remain vigilant with general and personal hygiene practices and social distancing requirements. By following the health advice issued by the Victorian Government, we can assure consumer confidence and that meat, seafood and pet food businesses remain open.

### Key points:

- There is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through meat or seafood;
- Extra care should be taken with personal hygiene and sanitation practices to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19;
- All Victorians must wear a **face covering** when they leave home no matter where they live, this also means wearing a face covering at work (there are lawful exemptions for not wearing a face covering). More information about face coverings can be obtained from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website – [DHHS Face Coverings](#);

- As always, staff with any contagious illness should NOT process or handle food;
- Everyone needs to follow social distancing directions made by the Victorian Government Chief Health Officer;
- Meat and seafood businesses are **permitted industries** under stage 4 restrictions therefore employers must ensure that their staff have **worker permits** if they travel for work. More information can be obtained from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) website – [Work Permits](#);
- All permitted workplaces that remain open must have a **COVID Safe Plan**.

**Meat and Seafood Retail Facilities** such retail butchers and retail seafood shops must complete a COVIDSafe Plan. Click here for guidance on your COVIDSafe Plan and a template for your business – [COVID Safe Plan](#).

**Meat and Seafood Processing Facilities** including abattoirs and further processors (including seafood and poultry) must complete a [COVIDSafe Plan](#) and a high risk [COVIDSafe Plan Attachment](#) regardless of where you operate in Victoria. These businesses must complete both documents.

During COVID-19, PrimeSafe's operations continue to ensure critical food safety functions are managed. Key points about PrimeSafe's operations include:

- Audits must occur as scheduled and can be conducted either remotely or on-site; and
- Prior approval is required to visit the PrimeSafe office.

Licensees who require further information about food safety and COVID-19 should contact PrimeSafe or see the following websites:

- [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\)](#);
- PrimeSafe website and COVID-19 [factsheet](#);
- [Business Victoria](#) for general information and assistance, especially for small businesses.

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## Licensee survey feedback

PrimeSafe commissioned an independent survey in March 2020 of a random statistically representative sample of PrimeSafe licensed businesses. A similar survey was conducted in 2018. [Click here](#) for the 2020 Licensee Survey Summary Report.

Key results of the survey include:

- Licensees responded positively to the new PrimeSafe's website that was refreshed in response to feedback received from the 2018 survey;
- General awareness of PrimeSafe's information and support services has increased from **50% to 62%**;
- Licensees understand the need for independent auditors;
- **84%** of licensees believe that the regulatory balance is appropriate;
- Licensees using PrimeSafe Information and Support services has increased from **37% to 59%**; and
- Licensees' satisfaction about their interactions with PrimeSafe increased from **93% to 96%**

The vast majority of licensees rated PrimeSafe's communication activities highly. Only a small proportion (<4%) of licensees were dissatisfied with some of PrimeSafe's communications, mainly about ensuring that businesses have an appropriate Food Safety Program in place.

To help licensees understand the benefits of using a Food Safety Program, PrimeSafe is developing forums to provide detailed information on their preparation and use.

PrimeSafe thanks those that participated in the survey and will seek to address the issues and requests for specific information through future communication activities.

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## About Food Safety Programs

In June 2019, PrimeSafe started providing free Food Safety Programs for the following licence categories:

- Retail Butcher Shops
- Seafood Retailers
- Retail Smallgoods
- Wildcatch (booklet)
- Meat Transport Vehicle (booklet)
- Game Meat Harvest Vehicles (booklet)

The PrimeSafe Food Safety Program is a simplified, user-friendly document system that allows licensees to manage food safety risks and comply with legislation and food safety standards.

The template Food Safety Program developed by PrimeSafe can be tailored to include more complex processes under a fee for service arrangement.

Please contact PrimeSafe [info@primesafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@primesafe.vic.gov.au) for further information.

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## VFA Small Sale Wildcatch Trial

A Wildcatch seafood trial by Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) commenced in July 2019. It permits commercial fishing licence holders to take select fish species such as snapper, whiting, calamari and gummy shark and sell them directly to tourists and locals from regional towns so that local businesses such as restaurants and supermarkets can sample locally sourced fish.

The VFA permits are only available to commercial fishers and operators; and have been issued for an initial two-year period. For ongoing sustainability, a two tonne annual catch-cap applies for all VFA permits issued, within which 500kg species-specific limits apply.

For more information on the Wildcatch seafood trial, please visit the [VFA website](#).

Any business that handles seafood for human consumption must hold a valid PrimeSafe seafood safety licence (*Seafood Safety Act 2003*). There are two PrimeSafe licence options for VFA small sales permit holders, either:

- Wildcatch licence (no retail sale) that allows fishers to harvest and supply to a land-based facility, which can sell and process the fish or seafood for sale; or
- Retailer licence, that allows fishers to catch fish and sell it directly from their vessel.

For more information, please refer to the Factsheets for VFA Small Sales Permit Holders on the [PrimeSafe website](#).

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