

# Annual Report of Food Incidents 2017

This report acts as a public record of incident levels for reference purposes. It presents numbers and types of incident notifications to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) that had the potential to impact on the safety of food or feed. It covers the financial year 2016/17 with some additional time series for the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2017.

Incidents include concerns about possible threats to the safety, quality or integrity of food and feed, as well as actual and confirmed threats. They are defined broadly, and differ widely in types, causes, severity and the route of reporting. The report includes breakdowns of the number of reported food and feed incidents by incident categories, notifier, and food commodity type. Due to changes in the data processing, the contents of this report differ from previous years. Further details of the changes can be found in the Comparability section of the accompanying quality report.

The FSA and FSS will investigate incidents to determine whether there are any food safety implications. Where appropriate, they will then take action to safeguard the public. Their Incident Database records the official audit trail of the investigations. It is the main source of the figures in the report.

The FSA and FSS also arrange the issue of food alerts to local authorities, other government departments, trade organisations. They also provide information about trans-border food issues under the Administrative Assistance Co-operation (AAC) system and send Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notifications to the European Commission. Furthermore, the FSA and FSS monitor food and feed safety patterns and promote awareness, good practice and information sharing. , (The FSS took over these responsibilities in Scotland from 1 April 2015).

Previously, a report of incident notification statistics was produced for each calendar year. However this release is now being reported on a financial year basis. To maintain continuity with previous years, tables based on calendar years are included in Appendix 4 at the end of this document.

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## Executive summary

In 2016/17, the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland were notified of and investigated 2,265 foods, feed and environmental contamination incidents in the UK. These incidents included concerns about possible threats to the safety, quality or integrity of food and feed, as well as actual and confirmed threats.

The five largest contributors to the total number of recorded incidents in 2016/17 were:

- Not determined / other (15%)
- Pathogenic micro-organisms (14%)
- Residues of veterinary medicinal products (9%)
- Allergens (8%)
- Chemical contamination (other) (6%)

**Not determined/ other:** In 2016/17, 83% of the 331 *Not determined / other* incidents related to clandestine entrants. A clandestine entrant is a person who hides in a vehicle as it enters the United Kingdom with the aim of avoiding immigration controls. Their presence within freight vehicles presents a potential risk of contamination of incoming food loads.

**Pathogenic micro-organisms:** *Pathogenic micro-organisms* incidents relate to suspected or actual contamination by harmful bacteria, viruses or fungi. In 2016/17, 45% of the pathogenic micro-organisms incidents related to *Salmonella*. The number of *Salmonella*- related incidents has increased from 99 in 2013/14 to 139 in 2016/17.

**Residues of veterinary medical products:** Most of these incidents originate from the long-standing Statutory Surveillance Programme of residues of veterinary medicines in food producing animals. Any exceedances are routinely reported as an incident notification.

**Allergens:** The number of *allergen* incidents has risen from 89 in 2013/14 to a peak of 213 in 2015/16, before slightly dipping to 187 in 2016/17. Part of this pattern over time may be due to regulation changes, and varying sampling priorities. See Known issues 3, 4 and 5 for more details.

**Chemical contamination (other):** In 2016/17, fires were the cause of almost all *chemical contamination (other)* incidents.

About two-thirds of the incidents in 2016/17 were reported by local authorities (483), EU Member States and the European Commission (361), Border Inspections Posts (291) and “Other” notifiers (369) or listed central government bodies (288). The “Other” notifier category consists mainly of incidents being reported by laboratories and notifications of clandestine entrants. In addition, Industry reported 210 incidents in 2016/17.

The FSA issued 179 alerts and information notices to local authorities in 2016/17, with the FSS issuing a similar number (185). Other action taken to protect consumers in relation to food safety included the UK sending 365 notifications to the European Commission, via the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF).

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## Context of the statistics

An incident is defined as:

*Any event where, based on the information available, there are concerns about actual or suspected threats to the safety, quality or integrity of food and feed that could require intervention to protect consumers' interests.*

After investigation, many notified incidents prove to pose wither no or a minimal threat to consumers' interests, and no further action needs to be taken.

Incidents fall broadly into two categories:

- Incidents involving contamination of food or animal feed in the processing, distribution, retail and catering chains or at primary production or storage. These incidents may result in action to withdraw the food from sale and, in certain circumstances, to recall, alerting the public not to consume potentially contaminated food.
- Environmental pollution incidents, (for example: fires, sewage/chemical/oil spills, radiation leaks) that may involve voluntary or statutory action (such as orders made under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985).

The number of food incidents notified is affected by various factors:

- Many types of incidents occur sporadically and so tend not to be spread evenly across time.
- The number of notifications related to a given issue will depend on the level of testing and investigation being carried out. This in turn is influenced by changing concerns and priorities as new issues emerge and issues are managed.
- Businesses are required to inform either their local authority, port health authority, the FSA or FSS if there is reason to believe that food or feed is not compliant with food or feed safety requirements. Under the Food Law Code of Practice, local authorities are also obliged to report certain food and feed incidents that they identify. However, the frequency of notifications by other organisations and government bodies can be affected by revisions to reporting practices and policies.
- Natural chemical contamination and microbiological incidents are likely to be influenced by the weather, as are fires and other environmental contamination incidents.
- The assignment of notifications to the single most appropriate RASFF Hazard category can be a matter of judgement. This is a particular problem where an incident involves multiple threats to safety or quality, or the issue of concern does not fall neatly into a single category. This can influence the exact number of incidents in each Hazard category.

Therefore the number of incident notifications is only a measure of how many incidents the FSA and FSS have been made aware of. It is not an indicator of the level of risk to public health posed by the products in question, or of complexity associated with each incident

## Known issues that may have influenced the number of notifications in 2016 and 2017

Recent trends in incident notification numbers can be best interpreted if recent changes in related areas are understood. To provide some of that context, the following section lists the most prominent known issues for 2016 and 2017. However, the exact influence of these factors on reported incident frequency is impossible to ascertain.

1. The total number of migrants trying to enter the UK clandestinely each year is not known. However almost three times as many illegal entrants were encountered 'in-country' in the six months from 1 April 2015 compared to the same period in 2014 (Source: A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to 'lorry drops' October 2015 – January 2016, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration). Most of the clandestine entrants detected by Border Force officers at Coquelles and Calais ports were concealed in or on heavy goods vehicles. Although removed at the point of detection, the presence of illegal entrants in lorries carrying food and feed represents a potential safety risk requiring consignments to be inspected for contamination and damage before they can be placed on the market.
2. FSS has moved their approach to reporting the outcomes of monitoring of shellfish beds. From 2016 onward, the presence of algal toxins or high indicator E. coli counts are only reported as an incident when harvested product has been placed on the market. From 2012 to 2015, the adopted practice reported all such results before it was established if any product had been harvested. In the majority of such incidents, no product had been harvested and so there was no risk to consumers. (In England and Wales the closure of shellfish harvesting beds for either E.coli or biotoxin results above the maximum permitted level is recorded on the incidents database only when it is associated with a wider concern such as a food poisoning incident or a pollution event.)
3. In December 2014 the EU Food Information for Consumers (FIC) Regulation (No. 1169/2011) introduced new rules on providing allergen ingredients information for prepacked and non-prepacked food. Further to this, the requirements for nutritional and other labelling information also changed. Some food businesses are continuing to have issues with allergen labelling that is not FIC compliant.
4. Each year the FSA runs a National Coordinated Food Standards sampling programme (<https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/sampling>). This sets different priorities for Enforcement Authority risk-based sampling and surveillance. The levels of investigation may influence the numbers and types of incidents identified. The priorities for 2016/17 included:
  - Undeclared allergens and excessive levels of gluten in gluten free foods in non-prepacked foods sold by caterers
  - Arsenic in UK fruits and vegetables produced in the UK, milk and dairy products, cereals and cereal-based products, and rice and rice-based products.
  - Compliance of food supplements with supplements and health claims legislation, the presence of harmful and illegal substances and misleading labelling about composition
  - Irradiated herbs and spices, noodle meals, food supplements, frozen crustaceans and soft fruits

Full details can be found at [www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/sampling/samplingandsurveillance](http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/sampling/samplingandsurveillance).

FSS co-ordinates its own Local Authority sampling grants programme which is designed to take account of the UK food standards priorities in addition to areas of particular interest to

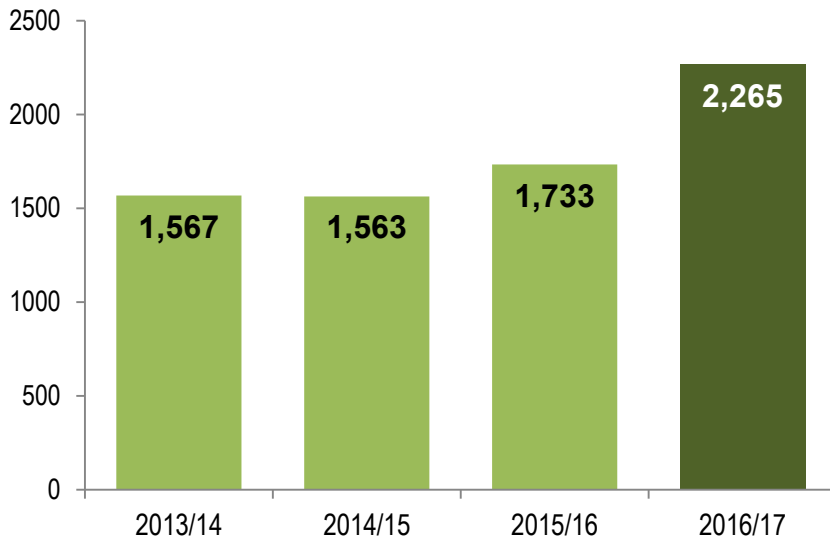
Scotland. In 2016/17 additional priorities covered by the FSS sampling grants programme included the following:

- Meat and fish substitution at retail and catering
  - Mycotoxins in flour
  - Acrylamide in bakery products
  - Microbiological quality of a range of ready to eat foods
5. Operation OPSON VI, a joint Europol-INTERPOL operation targeting counterfeit and substandard food and drink, resulted in a number of allergen labelling issues being highlighted and number of allergy alerts being issued on food supplements.
  6. The trend towards consuming food supplements for health reasons has led food manufacturers to include substances with physiological effects in their products. Some of these products may pose a health risk if consumed in sufficient quantities.
  7. In 2015/16 and 2016/17, the National Trading Standards feed delivery programme included additional sampling for coccidiostat carryover during the production process, and in final feeds. This follows concerns identified by the 2014 audit of the UK's animal feed controls by the European Commission Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)
  8. In 2016/17 the National Enforcement Priorities feed authorities were asked to give priority to sampling feeding stuffs (in particular trace elements, additives and pre-mixtures) which originated from outside the European Union.

## Total number of incidents

In 2016/17, the FSA and FSS were notified of and investigated 2,265 incidents. This is higher than in previous years, with 698 more incidents reported in 2016/17 than in 2013/14. Overall, the frequency of reported incidents has increased over the last nine years.

**Figure 1: Incidents notified to the UK Food Standards Agency, 2013/14 – 2016/17**



## Incidents by suspected or actual concern (Hazard type)

Incident notifications are classed according to the potential Hazard that is under investigation or that is ultimately of concern. So where no risk to the safety, quality or integrity of food and feed is identified, the incident will still be classified by the potential issue of concern.

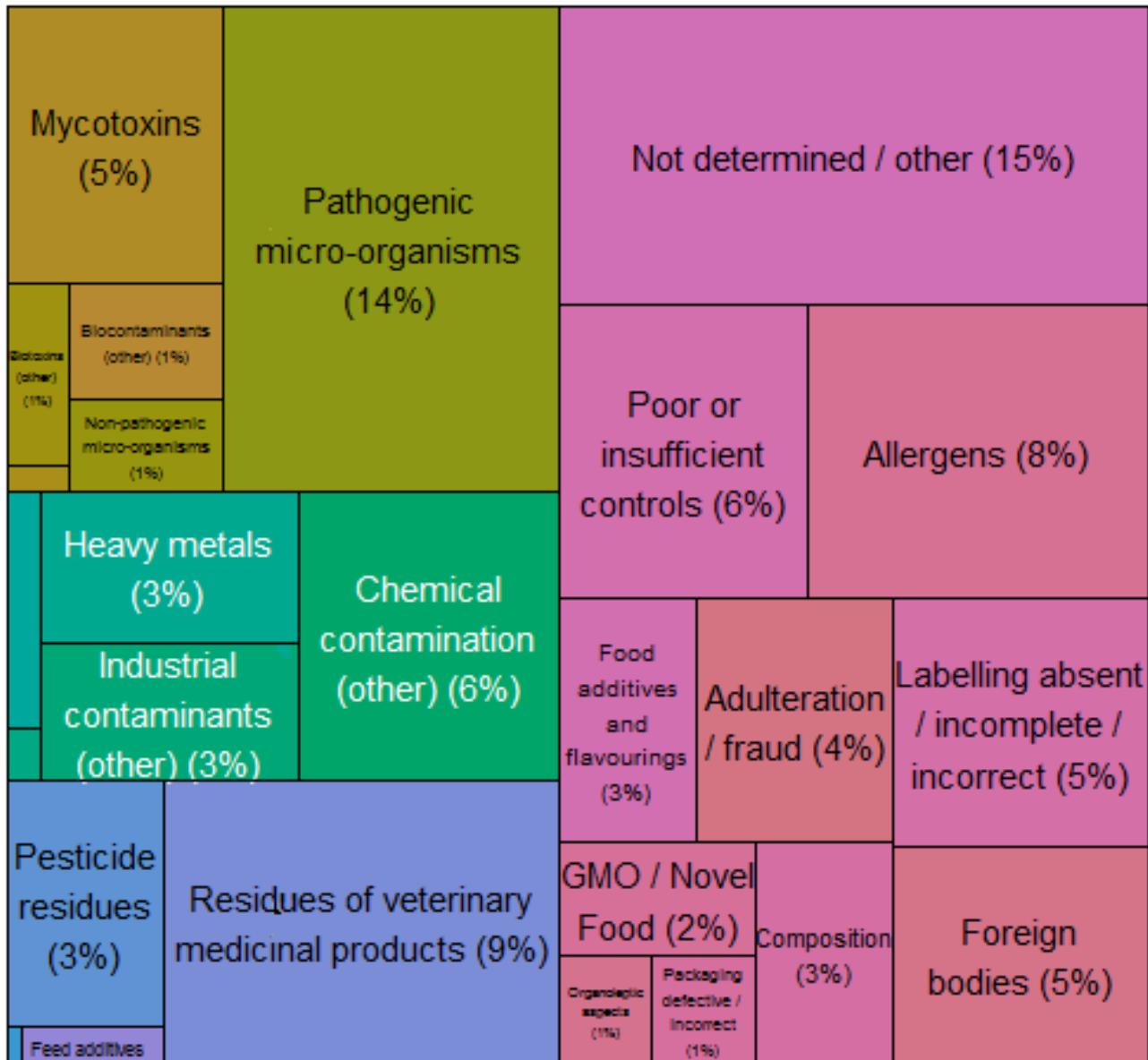
In 2016/17, the largest Hazard category was *Not determined / other* (15% of the notifications). The next largest category: *pathogenic micro-organisms* accounted for 14% of the incidents.

*Pathogenic micro-organisms* incidents relate to suspected, possible or actual contamination by harmful bacteria, viruses or fungi. It also includes concerns about measures to control the risk from pathogenic micro-organisms. In contrast, *Non-pathogenic micro-organisms* incidents chiefly relate to fungi or bacteria of a non-pathogenic or unidentified species.

The concern for *Mycotoxin* and *Biotoxin (other)* incidents is contamination by toxins produced by living organisms. *Mycotoxins* such as aflatoxin are produced by certain moulds that grow on crops and other feedstuffs. *Biotoxin (other)* incidents include algal toxins in shellfish, which are mainly reported as part of the regular monitoring of shellfish beds. *Biocontaminants (other)* incidents include sewage spills and toxins produced by the degeneration of animal or vegetable material.

*Residues of veterinary medicinal products* incidents accounted for most of the notifications in the "Farming practices" group. This includes those incidents that are routinely reported from the long-standing Statutory Surveillance Programme of residues of veterinary medicines in food producing animals.

**Figure 2: Relative numbers of incidents by suspected or actual concern (Hazard type): UK, 2016/17 <sup>1</sup>**



1. The Hazard categorisation follows that used by the EU's RASFF database. Some categories have a broader meaning than might be apparent from their title. For instance, "Adulteration / Fraud" also includes counterfeit products; illegal import and export (including irregularities with documentation) and the use of unauthorised premises to produce food.

Many of the incidents in the "Industrial / Chemical" group relate to *chemical contamination (other)*. Almost all of such incidents related to fires. Fires are recorded as a potential risk as combustion can produce polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are potentially carcinogenic. *Heavy metal* incidents chiefly involve lead and copper poisoning, usually occurring to livestock.

Of the final group of Hazards, the largest category in 2016/17 was *Not determined / other* (which mainly consists for notifications of clandestine migrants). *Allergens* incidents concern the undeclared presence of allergens, either as cross-contamination or undeclared ingredients. Labelling issues can include improper health claims, incorrect date labels and misleading food descriptions or usage instructions. *Foreign bodies* incidents involve contamination by materials such as plastic, metal and glass or the presence of pests and animal parts. *Poor or insufficient controls* include Incidents resulting from lack of good manufacturing practice such poor



temperature control of perishable foods, undercooking, unhygienic premises and inadequate documentation.

Furthermore, the *Adulteration / Fraud* category includes counterfeit products; illegal import and export (including irregularities with documentation), and the use of unauthorised premises to produce food . It should be noted the FSA's National Food Crime Unit use a narrower definition when it reports the number of fraud-related incidents. In particular, this would not typically include incidents where there is no or limited evidence of intention to deceive.

**Table 1: Number of Incidents by suspected or actual concern (Hazard type):  
UK, 2013/14- 2016/17 <sup>1</sup>**

Category	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
<b><i>Biological origin</i></b>				
Pathogenic micro-organisms	317	348	304	307
Non-pathogenic micro-organisms	23	20	35	27
Mycotoxins	82	54	58	113
Biotoxins (other)	52	68	56	21
Parasitic infestation	5		4	3
Biocontaminants (other)	6	19	21	33
<b><i>Farming practices</i></b>				
Residues of veterinary medicinal products	102	210	116	212
Pesticide residues	70	30	41	72
Feed additives	10	9	8	10
TSEs <sup>2</sup>	7	2	3	1
<b><i>Industrial / Chemical</i></b>				
Heavy metals	75	74	64	73
Migration	32	17	8	14
Radiation	7	4	6	3
Industrial contaminants (other)	28	28	63	67
Chemical contamination (other)	218	167	189	141
<b><i>Other</i></b>				
Allergens	89	140	213	187
Adulteration / fraud	62	62	66	91
Labelling absent / incomplete / incorrect	99	69	81	118
GMO <sup>3</sup> / Novel Food	18	9	16	41
Food additives and flavourings	63	49	35	62
Composition	27	46	38	58
Foreign bodies	92	65	97	104
Poor or insufficient controls	40	25	57	136
Organoleptic aspects	5	9	16	19
Packaging defective / incorrect	2	5	20	21
Not determined / other	36	34	118	331
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,567</b>	<b>1,563</b>	<b>1,733</b>	<b>2,265</b>

1. The Hazard categorisation follows that used by the EU's RASFF database. Some categories have a broader meaning than might be apparent from their title. For instance, "Adulteration / Fraud" also includes counterfeit products; illegal import and export (including irregularities with documentation) and the use of unauthorised premises to produce food.

2. Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy

3. Genetically modified organisms

## Key movements for individual incident categories

The overall number of incidents in 2016/17 was about 30% higher than the previous year. This section summarises the key changes for individual incident categories.

### Not determined / other

There has been a major change in the numbers and types of *Not determined / other* incidents. The frequency of clandestine entrant notifications rose from the start of 2016. In 2014/15, there were only 34 *Not determined / other* incidents which included just six notifications of clandestine entrants. In contrast, 83% of the 331 *Not determined / other* incidents in 2016/17 related to clandestine entrants.

A clandestine entrant is a person who hides in a vehicle as it enters the United Kingdom with the aim of avoiding immigration controls. Their presence within freight vehicles presents a potential risk of contamination of incoming food loads. Therefore, such incidents are usually notified to the FSA or FSS by the UK Border Force. However, such notifications also came from Border Inspections Post and HM Revenue and Customs, plus Local authorities, Industry, Police and others.

Although the total number of migrants entering the UK clandestinely each year is not known, there appear to have been large increases in recent years. Known issue 1 indicates evidence for rising numbers up to September 2015. More recent figures are not yet available.

### Pathogenic micro-organisms

The numbers of *pathogenic micro-organisms* incidents related to Scottish shellfish monitoring have varied considerably in recent years. There were 139 such incidents in 2014/15, more than four times the frequency in the previous year. The reason for this fluctuation is unknown but natural factors such as variation in weather might be responsible.

In the context of shellfish monitoring, high indicator *E. coli* counts are used to identify poor hygienic conditions in harvesting areas as a foundation for further controls on land. Elevated levels can signify a risk that faecal pathogens are present, but do not necessarily indicate a harmful pathogen. There are many different types of *E. coli*. Some live harmlessly in the intestines of humans and animals, whereas pathogenic strains can cause illness if contaminated food is consumed.

However, in 2016/17, there were only eight pathogenic micro-organisms incidents related to elevated *E. coli* levels in shellfish beds. This may be due to a change in reporting practices for Scotland shellfish beds (as described in Known issues 2) as incident notifications are now only made when harvested product had gone on the market.

In 2016/17, 45% of the *pathogenic micro-organisms* incidents related to *Salmonella*. The number of *Salmonella*- related incidents has increased from 99 in 2013/14 to 139 in 2016/17. Many of the *Salmonella* incidents in this period were associated with contaminated paan leaves from the Indian subcontinent. However the frequency of such incidents has slightly declined from 32 in 2013/14 to 25 in 2016/17. (Because of concerns about *Salmonella* contamination, the EU suspended imports of paan leaves from Bangladesh from February 2014, and increased sampling of paan leaves from

India from April 2014 and again in January 2015) These remaining *Salmonella* incidents are not obviously related to a particular cause, country of origin or foodstuff.

### **Biotoxins (other)**

Almost 90% of Biotoxin (other) incidents relate to the regular monitoring of algal toxins in shellfish. However, just 15 such incidents were reported in 2016/17, which was less than a third of the frequency in the three previous years. Again, the decrease could have been influenced by the change in reporting practices in Scotland, as described in Known issues 2.

### **Allergens**

The number of allergen incidents has risen from 89 in 2013/14 to a peak for 213 in 2015/16, before slightly dipping to 187 in 2016/17. The pattern over time may be influenced by the regulation changes described in Known issues 3. The numbers may also have been affected by the sampling priorities described in Known issues 4 and the investigations described in Known issues 5.

### **Residues of Veterinary medicines**

There is considerable year-to-year variation in the frequency of *residues of veterinary medicine* incidents. Most of these incidents originate from the Statutory Surveillance Programme, as any exceedances will lead to a notification. Consequently, the frequency of these incidents can be influenced by the different sampling plans used each year, as described in Known issues 7.

### **Chemical contamination (other)**

Almost all chemical contamination (other) incidents relate to fires. Their frequency may be affected by weather conditions and the level of reporting by Fire Services.

## Incidents by notifier type

Local authorities reported over 21% of all incidents in 2016/17. Together with central government and EU Member States, they accounted for 50% of all notifications.

**Table 2a: Incidents by notifier type: UK, 2013/14 – 2016/17**

Notifying Organisation	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Local authorities <sup>1</sup>	381	388	439	483
EU Member States & EU Central bodies <sup>3</sup>	215	219	266	361
Border Inspections Posts	218	46	99	291
Listed Central Government bodies <sup>2</sup>	253	255	232	288
Industry	123	109	181	210
Fire services	164	156	143	111
General public	17	25	38	108
Scottish Agricultural College	6	5	8	13
Police	14	4	5	12
Single Liaison Body	20	13	20	11
Water companies	7	1	1	4
Third country <sup>4</sup>	2	1	0	4
Nuclear Power Stations	0	0	1	0
Other <sup>5</sup>	147	341	300	369
<b>Total</b>	<b>1567</b>	<b>1563</b>	<b>1733</b>	<b>2265</b>

1. Including Port Health Authorities (73 incidents in 2016/17).

2. This comprises of all bodies listed in Table 2b.

3. Includes the European Commission plus RASFF notifications.

4. Any country outside the European Union & the EEA-EFTA (European Economic Area - European Free Trade Association).

5. Includes incidents recorded as being notified by laboratories.

The “Other” notifier category consists mainly of incidents being reported by laboratories and notifications of clandestine entrants. The breakdown by notifiers should be treated with caution. For instance, two identical incidents originating from the same monitoring program may be recorded as having different notifiers. This is because several organisations are involved, and can be thought of as the notifier. See Appendix 2 for a detailed description of the notifier types.

**Table 2b: Incidents notified by certain central government bodies: UK, 2013/14 – 2016/17**

<b>Notifying Organisation</b>	<b>'13/14</b>	<b>'14/15</b>	<b>'15/16</b>	<b>'16/17</b>
DAERA <sup>1</sup>	53	86	69	67
Animal and Plant Health Agency <sup>2</sup>	73	84	65	52
HM Revenue and Customs	2	0	12	48
Food Standards Agency	16	12	11	37
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs	21	17	46	32
Public Health England (PHE)	24	20	13	21
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	33	14	1	11
Environment Agency (EA)	14	7	5	9
Health Protection Scotland (HPS)	2	4	4	4
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	6	7	2	3
Department of Health (DH)	4	0	1	3
Maritime & Coastguard Agency	0	0	0	1
National Health Service (NHS)	5	1	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>288</b>

1 The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is the Northern Ireland Government Department which, under local government reform, was established on 8 May 2016. It was formerly known as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD NI).

2. Previously the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

## Incidents by food and feed type

As in previous years, the food commodity type associated with the most incidents is “meat and meat products (other than poultry)”, Many of the incidents related to the regular monitoring under the Statutory Surveillance Programme. There were 250 such incidents relating to “fruit and vegetables” in 2016/17, including 106 notifications of clandestine migrants. The number of incidents concerning "Dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods" may be influenced by Known Issues 4, 5 and 6.

**Table 3a: Incidents attributable to a food commodity type: UK, 2016/17**

Food commodity type	Number of incidents
Meat and meat products (other than poultry)	377
Fruits and vegetables	250
Dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	166
Cereals and bakery products	129
Nuts, nut products and seeds	122
Poultry meat and poultry meat products	107
Fish and fish products	92
Prepared dishes and snacks	88
Milk and milk products	84
Herbs and spices	70
Confectionery	70
Feed for animals	68
Soups, broths, sauces and condiments	52
Bivalve molluscs and products thereof	46
Other food product / mixed	42
Non-alcoholic beverages	39
Crustaceans and products thereof	26
Cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	19
Alcoholic beverages	17
Fats and oils	14
Eggs and egg products	13
Water for human consumption (other)	9
Honey and royal jelly	9
Ices and desserts	9
Food additives and flavourings	6
Wine	4
Cephalopods and products thereof	2
Gastropods	2
Natural mineral water	0
Not attributable to a particular food commodity	333
<b>Total incidents</b>	<b>2,265</b>

1. Includes feed pre-mixtures, feed materials, compound feeds, pet food and feed additives.

**Table 3b: Incidents not attributable to a specific food: UK, 2016/17**

Type of non – attributable incident	Number of incidents
Related to environmental contamination	190
Related to food contact materials	13
Other	130
<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>

About 15% of incidents were not attributable to a specific commodity type. Most of these were caused by fires and events potentially contaminating areas of food production. A few involved contamination through food contact materials. They include cooking and eating utensils that can come into contact with a wide range of foods. The remaining 130 incidents were not attributed to a particular food. Often, this is because the incident is associated with a particular premises but the affected products are not known. For instance, it is not always possible to identify the contaminated food in cases of food poisoning or poor food controls.



## Food alerts and information notices

The FSA and FSS issue food alerts as a key way of communicating with consumers and Local Authorities about products that have been recalled, and tell them what action they need to take.

- A Product Recall Information Notice (PRIN) is issued when a company recalls a product which is, or which is believed to be unsafe. The primary audience of a PRIN is consumers. They are issued to Local Authorities for information purposes.
- An Allergy Alert (AA) is issued when a company recalls a product because it is, or is believed to be unsafe because of undeclared allergens or incorrect allergen labelling. The primary audience of an AA is consumers. They are issued to Local Authorities for information purposes.
- A Food Alert for Action (FAFA) is issued to alert Local Authorities to an incident where a food business operator cannot or will not adequately withdraw or recall unsafe products. FAFAs ask Local Authorities to take action to ensure those products are removed from the market. The primary audience of a FAFA is Local Authorities. They are also published on the FSA and FSS websites to inform consumers.

If a product that is the subject of a PRIN, AA or FAFA is being recalled both in Scotland and in other parts of the UK, then the FSA and FSS will issue reciprocal alerts. There is considerable overlap between the alerts issued by each body. In 2016/17, there were 140 incidents that led to a food alert or updates being issued both by FSS and by the FSA. These 140 incidents accounted for 92% of the 179 FSA alerts and updates and 92% of the 187 FSS alerts and updates. More than half of the alerts and notices were Allergy Alerts.

**Table 4a: Food Alerts and Information Notices issued by the FSA by Alert Category, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2016/17**

Alert category	Number of alerts & notices	Number of updates	Total
Allergy Alerts (AA)	88	10	98
Product Recall Information Notice (PRIN)	62	15	77
Food Alert for Action (FAFA)	3	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>179</b>

**Table 4b: Food Alerts and Information Notices issued by the FSS by Alert Category, Scotland 2016/17**

Alert category	Number of alerts & notices	Number of updates	Total
Allergy Alerts (AA)	87	10	97
Product Recall Information Notice (PRIN)	68	14	82
Food Alert for Action (FAFA)	4	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>187</b>

## **EU RASFF Notifications**

The FSA, FSS and UK Port Health Authorities also inform the Commission and other Member States of matters that they need to act on. The information is passed on using the European Commission's RASFF System. In 2016/17, the UK issued a total of 365 RASFF notifications, although 3 were later withdrawn. The remainder comprised 41 rapid alerts, 264 border rejection notifications and 60 information notices (source: RASFF Portal; accessed 12 May 2017).

# Appendix 1: Who tells the FSA and FSS about incidents?

## Food business operators

Businesses are required to inform either their local authority, port health authority, the Food Standards Agency or Food Standards Scotland if there is reason to believe that food or feed is not compliant with food or feed safety requirements. . European legislation<sup>1</sup> specifies the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and lays down procedures in matters of food safety.

Food business operators are required, under Article 19 of Regulation No. 178/2002, to inform the competent authorities where they have reason to believe that a foodstuff that they have imported, produced, manufactured or distributed is not in compliance with food safety requirements. In the case of the UK, the competent authorities for food are the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland and the food authorities (local and port health authorities). (The competent authority for feed in Northern Ireland is DAERA). Both industry and local authorities can report incidents online. Online report forms are available on both the FSA and FSS websites (see Appendix 2).

## Local authorities

Under the Food Law Code of Practice<sup>2</sup>, local authorities have a requirement to notify the FSA and/or FSS of certain food incidents. The code of practice provides instructions and criteria that food authorities should have regard to when engaged in the enforcement of food law. Food authorities must follow and implement the provisions of the code that applies to them.

Local authorities regularly undertake inspections of premises and sample products from wholesale or retail outlets. Where breaches of food safety requirements are identified, the authority will contact the appropriate Incidents Branch using the incident report form.

The FSA is the designated liaison body for the purposes of Article 35 of Regulation 882/2004. As such, it is responsible for assisting and co-ordinating communication between competent authorities in EU Member States and the transmission and reception of requests for assistance using the Administrative Assistance and Co-operation (AAC) system. Local authorities will provide information about trans-border food issues to the FSA or FSS to communicate via the AAC system (see below).

Port health authorities (PHAs) have somewhat different responsibilities from inland LAs. In particular, several act as EU-approved entry points for imports that are of non-animal origin. This function is similar to the role that Border Inspection Posts have for products of animal origin (see below).

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 ('the Regulation')

<sup>2</sup> The FSA and FSS each publish a version of this document, which provides instructions and criteria to which local authorities should have regard to when carrying out their food law regulatory and enforcement duties.

## **The European Commission**

The European Commission operates the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The RASFF is a network of member states, the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority. Whenever a member of the network has any information relating to the existence of a serious direct or indirect risk to human health, this information is immediately forwarded to the Commission using a rapid alert form. The Commission then immediately transmits this information to the members of the network. Likewise when the FSA or FSS finds an issue that affects or could affect other member states or third (non-EU) countries, they notify the Commission through the RASFF system.

The AAC IT system works in a similar way to RASFF but is for non-safety related non-compliance including food fraud issues. The AAC system provides Member States with administrative assistance, to cooperate and to exchange information in order to ensure that cross-border instances of food and feed law non-compliance are effectively pursued. It also receives incoming requests for assistance and directs these to the appropriate originating authority. The European Commission will coordinate the action undertaken by Member States where instances of non-compliance are widespread or recurrent, or where Member States fail to agree on how to address non-compliance.

## **Members of the public**

Occasionally, the FSA or FSS will receive notification of food incidents and quality issues from members of the general public, although the public should always contact their local authority first. To find your nearest food enforcer, use the search facility on our website at: [www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enforceessential/yourarea/](http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enforceessential/yourarea/)

Regarding food complaints from consumers who may have suffered food poisoning, or found food on sale past its use-by date, investigation of isolated complaints of this kind is the responsibility of local authority food enforcement officials. The FSA and FSS will promptly forward any complaints they receive to the relevant local authority to investigate.

## **Emergency services**

Notifications are regularly received from the police, fire service and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. These notifications usually relate to fires, oil or sewage spills or chemical leaks where there is the potential for contamination in the food chain.

## **Other government departments/agencies**

Notifications may be received from a range of government departments or agencies: including:

- the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland) (DAERA).

- the Environment Agency.
- the UK's public health authorities.
- the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
- the Scottish Agricultural College

### **Border inspection posts (BIPs)**

BIPs are EU-approved entry points for products of animal origin, originating from countries outside the EU. UK BIPs routinely sample incoming consignments of foodstuffs to ensure compliance with legislation. Adverse results are notified to the FSA and/or the FSS and action is taken to ensure that the incoming consignment is destroyed, re-exported or re-processed where permissible.

Border Rejection Notifications are sent by the FSA and the FSS to the European Commission via RASFF for circulation to all member states. Information circulated in this manner is used by BIPs to determine which incoming consignments to sample. Following the rejection of a consignment at a BIP, the responsible manufacturer or exporter can expect to have further consignments sampled to ensure compliance with legislation.

The FSA and the FSS also receive rejection notifications from Designated Points of Entry (DPEs) for consignments of food of non-animal origin. They are treated in the same way, but the notifier may be recorded as "Local Authority".

### **Miscellaneous organisations and facilities**

Groups such as the Anaphylaxis Campaign, Coeliac UK and Allergy UK will notify the FSA if they become aware of any issues relating to food allergies. Nuclear Power stations<sup>3</sup> and independent laboratories will also notify the FSA or FSS of incidents.

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<sup>3</sup> These relate to statutory notifications when advisory levels are exceeded, usually due to routine maintenance shut-downs of the reactors. These shut-downs result in short-term increases in gaseous discharges but typically remain within overall authorised limits.

## Appendix 2: How can you get in touch with us?

We try to always meet the needs of our users. If you have any feedback on the publication please send it to [robin.clifford@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:robin.clifford@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk).

### How to report a food incident

Food Incidents should be reported using an incident report form located at: [incidents.foodapps.co.uk/IncidentReportForm/login.aspx](http://incidents.foodapps.co.uk/IncidentReportForm/login.aspx)

Food Incidents in Scotland can be reported via:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/food-safety-standards/food-incidents>

### Contact details for FSA headquarters (England)

Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH

Tel: 020 7276 8448 (out of hours: 0345 051 8486)

Fax: 020 7276 8788 email: [foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Contact details for FSA Wales

11th Floor, Southgate House, Wood Street, Cardiff CF10 1EW

Tel: 029 2067 8999 (out of hours: 07789 926573)

Email: [wales.foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wales.foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Contact details for FSA Northern Ireland

10a- 10c Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG

Tel: 028 9041 7739/7708 (out of hours: 07784 473022)

Email: [incidents.ni@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:incidents.ni@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Contact details for Food Standards Scotland

4th Floor, Pilgrim House, Old Ford Road, Aberdeen, AB11 5RL

Tel: 01224 288 379 or 01224 285 138 (out of hours: 07881 516867)

Email: [incidents@fss.scot](mailto:incidents@fss.scot)

## Appendix 3: Glossary of terms

<b>AA</b>	Allergy Alert
<b>AAC</b>	Administrative Assistance Co-operation
<b>APHA</b>	Animal and Plant Health Agency
<b>BIP</b>	Border Inspection Post
<b>DAERA</b>	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland)
<b>DARD</b>	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Northern Ireland)
<b>Defra</b>	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>DH</b>	Department of Health
<b>DPE</b>	Designated Point of Entry
<b>EA</b>	Environment Agency
<b><i>E. coli</i></b>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>EFSA</b>	European Food Safety Authority
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUFIC</b>	EU Food Information for Consumers regulation
<b>Europol</b>	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
<b>FAFA</b>	Food Alert – For Action
<b>FSA</b>	Food Standards Agency
<b>FSS</b>	Food Standards Scotland
<b>FVO</b>	European Commission Food and Veterinary Office
<b>GMO</b>	Genetically Modified Organism
<b>HPS</b>	Health Protection Scotland
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>MMO</b>	Marine Management Organisation
<b>NCA</b>	National Crime Agency
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>PAH</b>	Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
<b>PHA</b>	Port Health Authority
<b>PHE</b>	Public Health England
<b>RASFF</b>	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
<b>PRIN</b>	Product recall Information Notice
<b>SLB</b>	Single Liaison Body
<b>TSE</b>	Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

## Appendix 4: Numbers of incidents by calendar year

Table 4.1: Number of Incidents by RASFF hazard category: UK, 2013- 2016 <sup>1</sup>

Category	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Biological origin</b>				
Pathogenic micro-organisms	307	377	277	301
Non-pathogenic micro-organisms	26	18	34	26
Mycotoxins	88	64	49	98
Biotoxins (other)	52	68	56	19
Parasitic infestation	4	1	3	4
Biocontaminants (other)	0	19	24	32
<b>Farming practices</b>				
Residues of veterinary medicinal products	75	207	116	185
Pesticide residues	114	49	30	70
Feed additives	11	4	12	10
TSEs <sup>2</sup>	10	0	3	3
<b>Industrial / Chemical</b>				
Heavy metals	75	77	65	73
Migration	29	21	9	13
Radiation	4	7	5	4
Industrial contaminants (other)	20	32	59	66
Chemical contamination (other)	241	155	182	161
<b>Other</b>				
Allergens	89	127	206	169
Adulteration / fraud	63	69	58	92
Labelling absent / incomplete / incorrect	97	80	71	107
GMO <sup>2</sup> / Novel Food	10	16	16	26
Food additives and flavourings	52	59	36	59
Composition	18	49	34	59
Foreign bodies	105	69	78	101
Poor or insufficient controls	34	30	44	117
Organoleptic aspects	5	6	9	23
Packaging defective / incorrect	1	6	15	21
Not determined / other	32	35	23	340
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,562</b>	<b>1,645</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>2,179</b>

1. The Hazard categorisation follows that used by the EU's RASFF database. Some categories have a broader meaning than might be apparent from their title. For instance, "Adulteration / Fraud" also includes counterfeit products; illegal import and export (including irregularities with documentation) and the use of unauthorised premises to produce food.

2. Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy

3. Genetically modified organisms



**Table 4.2a: Incidents by notifier type: UK, 2010 – 2016**

Notifying Organisation	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Local authorities <sup>1</sup>	376	297	346	359	403	409	453
EU Member States & EU Central bodies <sup>3</sup>	166	155	163	197	246	213	346
Listed Central Government bodies <sup>2</sup>	192	231	176	227	266	210	299
Industry	95	113	139	119	125	154	203
Fire services	223	246	179	177	154	148	113
Border Inspections Posts	233	426	397	270	93	63	244
General public	13	14	16	23	19	29	95
Single Liaison Body	83	85	71	31	14	19	10
Scottish Agricultural College	12	5	6	4	5	7	13
Police	7	7	2	14	5	3	9
Water companies	0	28	5	6	2	1	4
Nuclear Power Stations	3	1	1	1	0	1	0
Third country <sup>4</sup>	3	1	6	1	2	0	3
Other <sup>5</sup>	99	105	97	133	311	257	387
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,505</b>	<b>1,714</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>1,562</b>	<b>1,645</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>2,179</b>

1. Including Port Health Authorities (53 incidents in 2016).  
2. This comprises of all bodies listed in Table 2b.  
3. Includes the European Commission plus RASFF notifications.  
4. Countries outside the European Union and EEA-EFTA.  
5. Includes incidents recorded as being notified by laboratories.

**Table 4.2b: Incidents notified by certain central government bodies: UK, 2006 – 2015**

Notifying Organisation	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Department of Agriculture & Rural Development <sup>1</sup>	6	7	25	38	80	73	73
Animal and Plant Health Agency <sup>2</sup>	68	115	80	76	87	59	53
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs	35	28	5	16	14	40	44
Public Health England (PHE)	26	21	15	18	26	13	22
Environment Agency (EA)	20	15	10	16	5	6	11
Food Standards Agency	19	19	19	25	10	5	33
Health Protection Scotland (HPS)	-	-	-	3	3	5	3
National Health Service (NHS)	5	1	2	4	1	4	0
HM Revenue and Customs	0	0	1	1	1	2	49
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	9	5	8	19	28	1	4
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	0	0	0	7	7	1	4
Department of Health (DH)	0	0	0	4	1	1	2
National Crime Agency (NCA)	-	-	-	0	3	0	0
Maritime & Coastguard Agency	4	3	0	0	0	0	0
Ambulance Service	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Former government bodies	0	15	11	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>299</b>

1. Northern Ireland government body. 2. Previously the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.  
“-” indicates a period where this notifier was not in existence.

**Table 4.3a: Incidents attributable to a food commodity type: UK, 2016**

Food commodity type	Number of incidents
Meat and meat products (other than poultry)	374
Fruits and vegetables	251
Dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	138
Cereals and bakery products	132
Poultry meat and poultry meat products	103
Nuts, nut products and seeds	96
Milk and milk products	93
Fish and fish products	85
Herbs and spices	78
Prepared dishes and snacks	69
Confectionery	65
Feed for animals <sup>1</sup>	60
Soups, broths, sauces and condiments	41
Bivalve molluscs and products thereof	40
Non-alcoholic beverages	39
Other food product / mixed	35
Alcoholic beverages	25
Crustaceans and products thereof	21
Cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	18
Fats and oils	13
Water for human consumption (other)	13
Eggs and egg products	11
Ices and desserts	11
Honey and royal jelly	7
Food additives and flavourings	7
Wine	2
Cephalopods and products thereof	2
Gastropods	2
Natural mineral water	0
Not attributable to a particular food commodity	348
<b>Total incidents</b>	<b>2,179</b>

1. Includes feed pre-mixtures, feed materials, compound feeds, pet food and feed additives.

**Table 4.3b: Incidents not attributable to a specific food: UK, 2016**

Type of non – attributable incident	Number of incidents
Related to environmental contamination	204
Related to food contact materials	11
Other	133
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,179</b>

**Table 4.4a: Food Alerts and Information Notices issued by the FSA by Alert Category, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2016**

Alert category	Number of alerts & notices	Number of updates	Total
Allergy Alerts (AA)	85	11	96
Product Recall Information Notice (PRIN)	73	14	87
Food Alert for Action (FAFA)	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>185</b>

**Table 4.4b: Food Alerts and Information Notices issued by the FSS by Alert Category, Scotland 2016/17**

Alert category	Number of alerts & notices	Number of updates	Total
Allergy Alerts (AA)	88	12	100
Product Recall Information Notice (PRIN)	82	15	97
Food Alert for Action (FAFA)	4	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>204</b>