

Food Safety Cleaning Standards in Australia: What Food Manufacturers Need to Know

Canonical: <https://directory.realcorp.net.au/industrial-cleaning-melbourne/food-safety-cleaning-standards/food-safety-cleaning-standards-in-australia-what-food-manufacturers-need-to-know/>

Description:

Food Safety Cleaning Standards in Australia: What Food Manufacturers Need to Know Cleaning is not incidental to food safety in Australia — it is legally required, formally documented, and actively ...

Details:

Cleaning is not incidental to food safety in Australia — it is legally required, formally documented, and actively audited. Every food manufacturer in Australia operates under a regulatory framework that specifies cleaning obligations, and food safety auditors examine cleaning programs in detail during certification and surveillance audits. Getting cleaning right means understanding the standards, implementing appropriate procedures, and maintaining the documentation that proves compliance.

This guide explains the key Australian food safety cleaning standards, what they require in practice, how auditors assess cleaning compliance, and how Realcorp Commercial Cleaning can help food manufacturers meet these requirements with verified, documented, professionally executed cleaning programs.

The Regulatory Framework: FSANZ Food Safety Standards

Food safety in Australia is governed by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, administered by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). Two standards are directly relevant to cleaning in food manufacturing environments:

Standard 3.2.2 — Food Safety Practices and General Requirements

Standard 3.2.2 imposes obligations on food businesses to take all practicable measures to ensure their premises and equipment are clean and sanitary. The standard is outcomes-focused — it specifies what must be achieved rather than prescribing exactly how to achieve it — but the implications for cleaning programs are clear.

Key requirements under Standard 3.2.2 include:

****Cleanliness of food contact surfaces.**** Food contact surfaces — conveyor belts, cutting surfaces, processing equipment, packaging machinery, and any surface that food or food packaging touches — must be in a clean and sanitary condition before use. This requires cleaning and sanitising procedures that are validated to be effective, not simply cleaning procedures that look adequate.

****Cleanliness of food premises generally.**** The food premises must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. This extends beyond food contact surfaces to include floors, walls, drains, ceilings, equipment exteriors, and amenity areas.

****Pest prevention.**** Standard 3.2.2 requires food businesses to take all practicable measures to prevent pests entering food premises and to eradicate pests if they enter. Poor cleaning is the primary

driver of pest establishment in food facilities — inadequate removal of food residues from production equipment, floor areas, drains, and waste points provides harborage and food sources for rodents and insects.

****Waste disposal.**** Waste food and other waste must be collected, stored, and disposed of so as to minimise the attraction of pests and the contamination of food. Cleaning and waste management are closely linked in food manufacturing environments.

Standard 3.2.3 — Food Premises and Equipment

Standard 3.2.3 specifies requirements for the design and construction of food premises and equipment. While primarily relevant to facility design, it has important implications for cleaning: surfaces in food areas must be able to be effectively cleaned and sanitised. This means smooth, impervious, non-absorbent surfaces in food handling areas, designed without crevices and ledges that accumulate contamination and are difficult to clean.

For food manufacturers operating in existing facilities that may not fully meet the design requirements of Standard 3.2.3, the cleaning program must compensate — with more frequent cleaning, more rigorous verification, and particular attention to design non-conformances.

Beyond the Minimum: GFSI-Benchmarked Standards

Many Australian food manufacturers operate under quality management standards that go beyond FSANZ minimum requirements. These include:

****HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points).**** HACCP is the foundational food safety management approach for food manufacturing. Cleaning and sanitation programs are prerequisite programs (PRPs) under HACCP — they must be documented, validated, monitored, and subject to corrective action. A HACCP system without robust PRPs is incomplete.

****SQF (Safe Quality Food).**** SQF Code Edition 9 requires food manufacturers to have documented cleaning and sanitation programs that specify: the areas, items, and equipment to be cleaned; the frequency of cleaning; the person responsible; the cleaning agents and concentrations to be used; and the methods for verifying cleaning effectiveness.

****FSSC 22000 and ISO 22000.**** These international standards require prerequisite programs for cleaning and sanitation that are documented, implemented, maintained, and subject to monitoring and corrective action.

****BRC Global Standards.**** BRC requires documented cleaning schedules, validated cleaning procedures, and records of cleaning activities that are regularly reviewed by site management.

All of these standards share a common thread: cleaning must be documented, verifiable, and subject to systematic management — not ad hoc or assumed to be happening.

What a Cleaning Program Must Include

Whether you are operating under FSANZ minimum requirements or a GFSI-benchmarked standard, a compliant food manufacturing cleaning program should include:

1. Cleaning Schedule

A documented schedule specifying: - What gets cleaned (specific areas, equipment, and items) - When it gets cleaned (daily, between shifts, between product runs, weekly, monthly) - Who is responsible for each cleaning task - The method to be used (the step-by-step procedure)

2. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Detailed SOPs for each cleaning activity, covering: - Required equipment and PPE - Chemical to be used, dilution rate, and application method - Contact time for sanitisers - Rinsing requirements - Post-cleaning checks

3. Chemical Register

A register of all cleaning chemicals used on site, including: - Product name and supplier - Safety Data Sheet (SDS) - Intended use and application area - Dilution rates and application instructions - Food contact suitability (where applicable)

4. Verification Procedures

Methods for confirming that cleaning has been effective. These may include: - Visual inspection checklists - ATP (adenosine triphosphate) bioluminescence testing for microbial contamination on surfaces - Allergen swab testing after allergen changeovers - Microbiological surface swabs as part of environmental monitoring

5. Cleaning Records

Complete records of all cleaning activities, demonstrating: - The cleaning was performed as scheduled - Who performed it - When it was performed - Any corrective actions taken when cleaning was found to be inadequate

What Auditors Look For

Food safety auditors examining cleaning programs are looking for evidence that the cleaning program is not just documented on paper but is being implemented effectively in practice. Specific audit focus areas include:

****Schedule vs reality.**** Is the written cleaning schedule being followed? Auditors compare the documented schedule with actual cleaning records. Gaps, inconsistencies, or records that appear to have been completed without reflecting actual practice are red flags.

****Chemical control.**** Are the right chemicals being used at the right concentrations? Auditors may check dilution equipment, check chemical log records, and in some cases take samples. Undiluted sanitisers applied too concentrated can leave harmful residues; over-diluted sanitisers fail to achieve the required kill level.

****Verification records.**** Are the results of ATP tests, allergen swabs, or visual inspections being recorded and reviewed? Are corrective actions taken when results are outside acceptable limits?

****Allergen control.**** For facilities producing products with and without allergens, auditors specifically examine allergen cleaning procedures, changeover records, and any allergen verification results.

****Pest prevention.**** Are there signs of pest activity that indicate inadequate cleaning or sanitation? Are waste and food residue management practices effective?

****Staff training.**** Do cleaning staff understand what they are supposed to be doing and why? Can they explain the procedures, name the chemicals, and identify the critical steps?

How Realcorp Supports FSANZ Compliance and Food Safety Audits

Realcorp Commercial Cleaning is not a generic cleaning company that happens to occasionally clean a food facility. We are an experienced food manufacturing cleaning contractor with an active contract at McCain Foods in Ballarat — a 24/7 food manufacturing facility where we operate continuously across multiple shifts under food safety standards.

The Realcorp App: Your Audit Evidence Trail

The single most important thing Realcorp brings to food safety cleaning compliance is verifiable documentation. The Realcorp App generates a digital audit trail for every cleaning activity:

****GPS-verified attendance.**** Every cleaning shift generates a GPS-verified record of when cleaning staff arrived and departed your site. This eliminates any question about whether scheduled cleaning was performed.

****Digital cleaning checklists.**** Each cleaning task is completed via a digital checklist in the Realcorp App, timestamped at the point of completion. Auditors can see not just that the end-of-day clean was done, but that the production floor was cleaned at 14:30 between Shift 1 and Shift 2, and the cool room was done at 22:15 after the last production run.

****Photographic evidence.**** Completed cleaning tasks can be documented with photographs — particularly valuable for hard-to-access areas, equipment surrounds, and areas that require before/after verification.

****Manager-accessible reports.**** Facility managers and quality teams can access cleaning records in real time, without waiting for paper records to be compiled. This is valuable not just for audits, but for day-to-day oversight and exception management.

When an auditor asks for three months of cleaning records for your production floor, the Realcorp App can produce them instantly, in a format that is clearly timestamped, GPS-verified, and complete.

TGA-Listed Disinfectants and Chemical Documentation

Realcorp maintains a complete chemical register for every site, including Safety Data Sheets, dilution rates, and food contact suitability information. All disinfectants used in food manufacturing environments are hospital-grade and TGA-listed. We can provide the chemical documentation required by your quality management system as a standard part of our service.

Trained Staff with Infection Control Awareness

Realcorp cleaning staff receive infection control training and site-specific induction for every food manufacturing environment. They understand the difference between cleaning and sanitising, the importance of correct chemical use, and the hygiene standards required in food production environments.

Direct Employment and Police Clearances

Every Realcorp staff member on your food manufacturing site is directly employed by Realcorp and holds a current police clearance. No subcontractors, no labour hire, no franchise operators. In a food manufacturing environment where staff access production areas and handle food-grade chemicals, this level of certainty about who is on your site is not optional.

Frequently Asked Questions

****What does FSANZ require for cleaning in food businesses?***

FSANZ Standard 3.2.2 requires food businesses to take all practicable measures to ensure their premises and equipment are in a clean and sanitary condition. In practice for food manufacturers, this means: a documented cleaning program covering all areas of the facility and all production equipment; appropriate cleaning chemicals used at correct concentrations; records demonstrating that cleaning was performed as scheduled; verification procedures to confirm that cleaning is achieving the required outcome (microbiologically safe surfaces); and corrective action procedures for when cleaning fails to meet the required standard. Standard 3.2.3 additionally requires that premises and equipment be designed to allow effective cleaning and sanitation. The detail of how these requirements translate into

a specific cleaning program depends on the nature of the food business, the risk profile of the products manufactured, and any additional quality management system requirements (HACCP, SQF, FSSC 22000, etc.) in place.

****How do I document cleaning for a food safety audit?***

Effective cleaning documentation for a food safety audit starts with a written cleaning schedule that specifies what, when, who, and how for every cleaning activity. Completed cleaning activities should be recorded contemporaneously — at the time they are completed — not retrospectively. Records should be retained for a period consistent with your product's shelf life and your quality management system requirements (typically a minimum of two years for most food manufacturing operations). Verification records — the results of visual inspections, ATP tests, allergen swabs, or microbiological swabs — should be linked to the relevant cleaning activity. Corrective actions taken when verification results were outside acceptable limits should be documented, along with the root cause and the action taken to prevent recurrence. The Realcorp App generates contemporaneous digital records for all Realcorp-performed cleaning activities, providing a verifiable audit trail that meets the documentation requirements of FSANZ, HACCP, SQF, and most other food safety standards.

****What chemicals are approved for food contact surface cleaning?***

For food contact surfaces — surfaces that directly contact food or packaging in contact with food — cleaning chemicals must be suitable for food contact application. In Australia, the key categories are: food-grade sanitisers (chlorine-based, quaternary ammonium compounds, peracetic acid, or other food-contact-approved formulations); food-grade detergents that are rinsed before food contact; and alkaline or acid cleaners used as part of a clean-then-sanitise sequence on surfaces that are thoroughly rinsed before food contact. Sanitisers used on food contact surfaces should be TGA-listed and approved for food contact use by the manufacturer. Cleaning chemicals used in food manufacturing should be documented in a chemical register that includes Safety Data Sheets and food contact suitability information. Realcorp maintains a complete chemical register for every food manufacturing site we service, and all food contact surface chemicals are TGA-listed and food-contact-grade.

****How do I know if my facility would pass a food safety audit on cleaning?***

A practical self-assessment against audit standards involves: reviewing your cleaning schedule and asking whether it covers every area and every piece of equipment in the facility, with appropriate frequency for the risk level; checking that your cleaning records are complete and contemporaneous for the past six months; verifying that your chemical register is current and that the chemicals being used match what is documented; walking through the facility looking for visible contamination (residues on equipment, build-up in drains, evidence of pest activity) that would indicate cleaning is not achieving its intended outcome; and checking that cleaning staff can explain what they are doing and why. If you identify gaps in any of these areas, addressing them before your next scheduled audit is strongly advisable. Realcorp can also support pre-audit cleaning programs — a comprehensive facility clean in the period before a scheduled audit to ensure the facility is presented at its best.

****What is ATP testing and should my facility be using it?***

ATP (adenosine triphosphate) bioluminescence testing is a rapid verification method for surface cleanliness. ATP is present in all living and recently deceased biological material — food residues, bacteria, biofilms. An ATP swab test detects the total ATP on a surface and provides a result in seconds, indicating whether the surface is clean (low ATP) or contaminated (high ATP). ATP testing is widely used in food manufacturing as a rapid verification step after cleaning of food contact surfaces, particularly after allergen changeovers and after cleaning of high-care areas. It is not a direct measure of microbial contamination (for that, microbiological swabs are used) but it is a fast, practical indicator of cleaning effectiveness. Whether your facility should use ATP testing depends on your quality management system requirements and the risk profile of your products. Many GFSI-benchmarked standards either require or strongly recommend ATP testing as part of a cleaning verification program.

Work with a Cleaning Contractor Who Understands Food Safety

Cleaning compliance in Australian food manufacturing is not a checkbox — it is an ongoing operational requirement that demands the right contractor, the right chemicals, the right documentation, and the right accountability.

Realcorp Commercial Cleaning has the food manufacturing experience, the documentation infrastructure, and the directly employed, trained staff to support your FSANZ compliance and food safety audit requirements.

****Call:**** 1300 307 298 ****Email:**** sales@realcorp.net.au ****Web:**** realcorp.net.au

Realcorp Commercial Cleaning. Cleaning compliance you can prove.