

Co-op Technical Guideline

Depot Quality Control

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1. Scope

This Technical Guideline applies to all Co-op brand temperature controlled and ambient products within the distribution chain. This includes fresh meat, poultry, fish, fresh produce whole and prepared, horticulture, frozen, ambient and other products as directed by the Co-op. The Depot QC's are responsible for assessing and managing the quality and safety of these products to ensure that our customers receive the quality they expect.

2. Introduction

The Co-op Food aims to provide products of consistent high quality that satisfy our customers legal and safety requirements.

The Co-op Depot Quality Control team conduct the following key procedures to monitor the quality of all products through the distribution chain, from the supplier to our stores:

- WIBIT Inspections (Would I Buy It) - looking at the product through the eyes of a customer
- QAS Inspection - measuring the product against all of the attributes on the Quality Attributes Sheet
- Shelf Life Trials for Produce
- Transit Trials Analysis

This Technical Guideline defines the procedures followed at the depot by the Co-op Depot QC's. These procedures are intended to ensure that consignments are assessed adequately in order to confirm compliance with specification or identify non-conforming product and to ensure the results are satisfactorily recorded, stored and shared internally and externally.

Please see **Appendix 1 – Supplier Guide to Depot Quality Control** for a summary of what's done, why, what the outcomes may be, charges and how to raise a query

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3. WIBIT Inspection Procedure

Depot QCs at each site will prioritise the products and suppliers that are to be inspected on a daily, weekly and monthly basis based upon the following factors:

- Quality Compliance with current Co-op specification QAS
- Recent rejections/referrals
- Recent Store claims
- Customer complaints
- Promotional activity/re-launches
- Seasonality and history
- Changes of Origin/ resourcing
- Feedback from members of Quality and Technical Team, Stores and Commercial Team

Depot QCs will then determine whether a product should undergo a Full or Cursory WIBIT

The inspections will follow this procedure:

Full WIBIT - minimum 3 cases per 100 cases delivered into depot

1st case	First pack label check
1st case	First pack label against box end label
1st case	100% of the packs handled and assessed
2nd case	50% of the packs split across the levels (if present) within the case
Subsequent cases	Minimum of 2 packs or handfuls (loose), top and bottom per case
Last case	Minimum of 2 packs or handfuls (loose), top and bottom per case
Last case	Last pack label check against box end label

Cursory WIBIT - minimum 1 case per 100 cases delivered into depot

1st case	First pack label check
1st case	First pack label against box end label
1st case	100% of the packs handled

All pack label checks will document the accuracy and clarity of the following:

- C** Class (if applicable)
- O** Origin (if applicable)
- D** Description
- U** Use By (or Best Before)
- M** M Code (or packer code)
- P** Pack size / weight

The above will be confirmed as correct and matching the box end label. If there are no issues identified in the full or cursory check, then the product will be accepted.

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In the event of quality, safety or legality issues being noted during a WIBIT inspection of a product, then a Reactive QAS inspection against current specification and QAS will be conducted. At the same time, depending on the scale of the issue, the Depot QC may send out a pre-notification email to the key stakeholders stating the product details and type of issue identified. The intention of this email is to bring any issues to the attention of key stakeholders as soon as possible.

Those stakeholders are:

- All Depot QC teams across our network, including NISA and independent Co-op society QCs
- The supplier
- Co-op Technical Manager responsible

4. QAS inspection procedure

The aim of QAS inspections is to ensure that all Co-op brand product supplied is in full compliance with the agreed supplier specification and QAS. They differ from the WIBIT inspections in that they assess the product against ALL measurable attributes in the QAS and specification.

Principles:

- As part of a QAS inspection, it will be necessary to carry out destructive sampling on a consignment of products to determine the internal quality.
- The product will always be assessed against all measurable quality parameters as detailed in the product specification and QAS located on MyCore.
- This includes a full assessment of the sample including physical attributes of:
 - Appearance, Flavour, Aroma and Texture
 - Weight checks
 - Sizing checks
 - Labelling
 - Country of Origin
 - Variety where applicable
 - Fruit counts
- The tolerances to be used will be taken from the active specification or Quality Attribute Sheets (QAS) on MyCore.
- All samples will be drawn on the day of paneling.

QAS inspections fall into two types:

- **Scheduled QAS** - as part of a scheduled monitoring of product performance.
- **Reactive QAS** - conducted following concerns raised during a WIBIT or as an expansion of a Scheduled QAS

Requests for a Scheduled QAS inspection can be made by the Technical Team or the Lead QC's based on current quality trends, customer complaints, store claims, new products development, re-launches, product recalls, rejections, referrals and historical trends. The Depot Quality Team will incorporate these requests into their panel schedules.

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Scheduled QAS inspection

The Depot QC will draw a minimum of three retail samples for each product line which requires assessing.

Issues identified in Scheduled QAS inspection

- All 3 samples score GREEN – No Action
- More than 1 sample scores AMBER – repeat with another 3 samples. If results are the same then move to Reactive QAS Inspection detailed below.
- Any number of samples Scoring RED – follow Rejection process
- Any combination of RED and AMBER scores - follow Rejection process

Reactive QAS inspection

The Depot QC will draw samples from a larger number of cases and in line with the Co-op Sampling Guide (CSG).

QCs will aim to visually inspect all of the packs included in the CSG sample size taken.

Co-op Sampling Guide (CSG)

Delivery case quantity	Cases quantity to be checked
Up to 100	10
101 to 300	14
301 to 500	18
501 to 1000	20
Over 1000	30 minimum

Upon completion of inspection using the CSG, the defects affecting the product will be measured as a percentage of the sample assessed. These will then be compared with the defect categories and tolerances in the specification and QAS. Depot QCs will then use the Depot QC Decision Tree to determine whether a product should be accepted, referred or rejected.

Pre-notifications

Depot QC aim to identify quality issues across all of our network as soon as possible so as not to disrupt the depot picking operation in our large depots where inspection of a product can take a considerable time. To that end Depot QCs may send out an internal alert to highlight that there is a potential issue that they are investigating and so allow Depot QCs in other sites to start an assessment as well. Not all pre-notifications will lead to a rejection. Therefore, if pre-notifications have been sent, and the product is only to be referred or accepted, then a response will be sent to all original recipients to confirm this.

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Issues identified in Reactive QAS inspection

- All samples score GREEN – No Action
- For all other defects follow the guidance on the QC Officer Decision Tree

Reactive QAS inspection outcomes

Following inspection products will fall into one of 3 outcomes:

- Green – the product is accepted and the detail from the QAS inspection has been logged
- Amber – the product is accepted but **Referred**. This means that during the inspection it was noted that certain attributes had defects that were towards the level of rejection and a notification is sent to highlight this. Suppliers should take steps to review the subsequent production of these lines and determine what corrective action can be taken. Technical Managers may discuss a Referred product with the supplier.
- Red – the product is not accepted and is **Rejected**. The product does not meet the minimum set out in the QAS and so is deemed unsuitable for our customers. Suppliers should take steps to review the subsequent production of these lines and determine what corrective action can be taken. Technical Managers may discuss a Rejected product with the supplier.

5. Rejection Procedure

Where quality, safety or legal defects are identified at a level above the RED tolerances stated in the specification or QAS, then the whole consignment must be rejected. Consideration can be given to different batches/ varieties/ date codes with a delivery according to the time allowance.

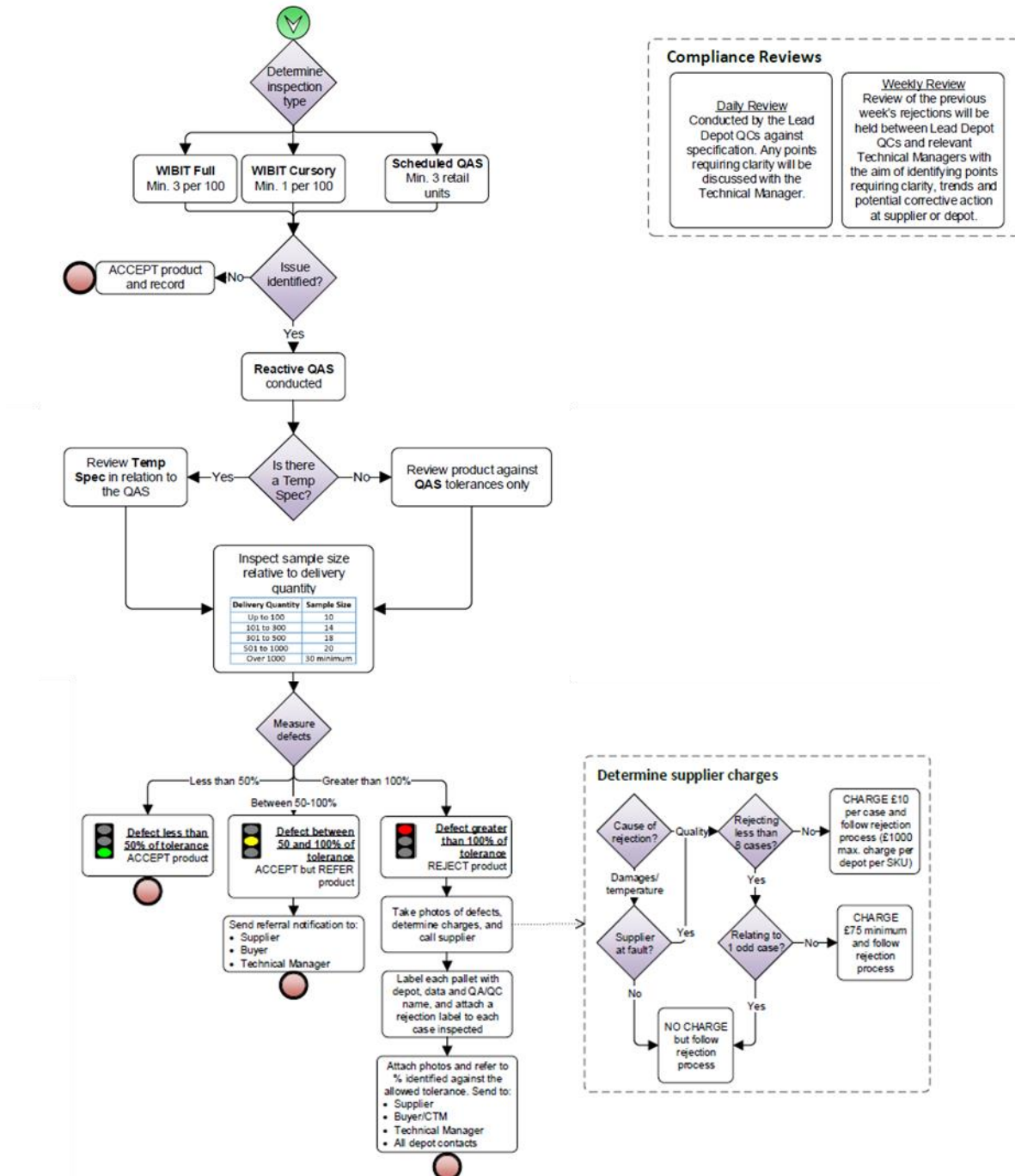
- Rejected consignments will be marked by applying, dated and initialed Co-op Quality Team rejection labels onto all cases checked, accordingly to Co-op Sampling Guide.
- The labels will not be affixed directly to the plastic multiple use Co-op crates, but will be placed in the slots provided or another way that respects the Co-op group property and equipment.
- Affixing is permitted on to cardboard single use boxes or single use packaging.
- Rejection notifications will be generated and these will include any applicable charges determined from the Depot QC Decision Tree
- Notification of rejections will be sent to the supplier, Co-op Technical Manager, Buyer, Supply Chain Manager, key depot personnel, Quality Team Midlands, Quality team at Nisa (as Co-op brand product goes through their depots) and Primary Logistics when applicable.
- A daily review of rejections will be conducted by Lead Depot QCs against specification and any points requiring clarity will be discussed with the Technical Manager
- A weekly review of the previous week's rejections will be held between Lead Depot QCs and the relevant Lead Technical Managers with the aim of identifying points requiring clarity, trends and potential corrective action at supplier or depot.

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Depot QC Decision Tree

Commercial Process Development Team
Last updated: April 2019



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Supplier Rejection queries

Should a supplier wish to raise a query or concern about a Rejection notification then they should:

1. Contact the Depot QC who carried out the assessment, if they would like further clarification such as:
 - more information/ photos
 - the findings of the quality assessment
 - the quantity of cases rejected.

Contact details will be shown on the Assessment details page of the notification.

2. Contact the Co-op Technical Manager responsible for the product if they would like to query the specification itself.

Their contact details are available on MyCore.

3. For all other questions the supplier should contact Supplier Engagement Team on supplierengagement@coop.co.uk

6. Shelf Life Trials – Produce only

The aim of Shelf Life Trials is to ensure that all Co-op Produce maintains its freshness and quality up to the Best Before dates, ensuring our customer receives a product fit for purpose. Depot QCs may conduct a Shelf Life Trial for any of the following reasons:

- Customer Complaints – Report with DAILY customer complaints is analyzed and products are trialed on different depots across the network.
- Store Claims – Feedback from the stores on product life will trigger shelf life tests at depot.
- Technical Manager Advice – Advice from the Co-op Technical Team on product life and issues identified will trigger shelf life tests at depot.
- Referrals/Rejections – Issues identified by the quality team will trigger shelf life tests at depot.
- Seasonal/Country of origin changes – To ensure that the life of the product maintains its quality.
- Temporary Specification - on extended life only.

Procedure

- Two samples of pre-pack product or two hands of loose produce are drawn on delivery days when commencing the test. The samples are to be stored in a suitable ambient environment or domestic fridge.
- Samples will be evaluated against the QAS.
- Any issues/defects identified during the test, will be recorded on the Shelf Life Monitoring Sheet using the RAG system.
- Issues/defects rated as AMBER – test to continue to BB or 2+BB or until product is deemed RED within the duration of the trial.
- Issues/Defects rated as RED to BB date – Test to stop, Supplier, Quality Team and Co-op Technical Manager will be notified. In addition, supplier asked for their results.

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7. Transit Trials

Transit trials may need to be completed for new products to ensure the product quality is not compromised during transit. In this instance, contact should be made via the Co-op Technical Manager to arrange with the depot and store that product will be sent to. Samples sent in for transit trial should be clearly marked as TRANSIT TEST ONLY.

8. History of amendments

Version number	Date	Details of amendment including sections numbers amended
1	10 th July 2017	First issue
2	26 th Nov 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification on inspection types • Introduction of Depot QC Decision tree including charging • Mention of Nisa QCs • Inclusion of a section about supplier queries relating to rejections.
3	2 nd April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of Pre-notifications • Daily and weekly reviews introduced of rejections. • Added 10. Appendix 1 - Supplier Guide to Depot Quality Control • Renumbered throughout • Updated Depot QC Decision Tree

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9. Appendix 1 - Supplier Guide to Depot Quality Control

Why do quality control?

At the Co-op, we aim to maintain a consistently high standard, ensuring our products meet our customers legal, safety and quality requirements. Quality control checks are conducted at our depots with the primary purpose of ensuring our customers receive our products in the best possible standard.



What's involved in quality control checks?

The procedures are intended to confirm compliance with specification, or identify non-conforming products to ensure results are recorded, stored and shared. Upon completion of the inspection, any defects are measured as a % of the overall sample, and the product specification is referenced for defect tolerances. In the event that tolerances are exceeded, the product will be rejected.



There are 2 key procedures carried out:

- **Would I Buy It (WIBI) inspections**
- **QAS inspections**

Who conducts the checks?



We have **Depot Quality Controllers** based at all our warehouses. Their role is to assess and manage the quality and safety of our temperature controlled and ambient products. Checks are conducted to ensure quality, safety and integrity is maintained across the distribution chain. The team are there to make sure only Co-op products of acceptable quality reach our stores and customers.

Which specification should we be working to?

The specification is agreed at the initial stages of supply (this can subsequently be amended by agreement by both parties), and are stored on the MyCore system which can be accessed [here](#)

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How are the key procedures conducted?

1 WIBIT inspections



Daily



The product is viewed through the eyes of a customer using “**Would I Buy It**” principles.

We aim to check as many products as possible.

Inspections may be triggered due to:

- Promotional activity/re-launches
- Seasonality/track-record
- Changes of origin

If we find anything that we think may be wrong at this stage then we’d look at conducting a QAS inspection →

2 QAS inspections



When identified
or as per panel
schedule



We carry out a QAS inspection for one of 2 reasons:

- During WIBIT we find a quality, safety or legal issue that we think we need to double check;
- We’ve scheduled the product for that day based on recent rejections/referrals, store claims, or customer complaints.

We assess against the specification and QAS we’ve already agreed with you, and where tolerances exceed the stated level, the rejection procedure will be followed. When assessing for a rejection we take the following sample size:

Delivery Quantity	Sampling Guide
Up to 100	10
101 – 300	14
301 – 500	18
501 – 1000	20
Over 1000	30 minimum

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Rejection Charges and Notices

If we need to reject products, we will aim to let you know as soon as possible on that day (ideally within 30 minutes of the issue being identified). We'll send an email to your **Quality Notifications** contact taken from MyCore, so it's important these contacts are kept up-to-date. Where possible, we would recommend this email address is a shared inbox, as this will be easier when it comes to managing holidays and people changing roles within your business (e.g. *CoopQualityRejections@YourSupplier.com*).

The email will contain a Rejection Document explaining what we've found and what the charge will be. Charging is based on:

There is a **minimum of 30 days** between receiving a rejection notification and the invoice being raised.

The following options will be included on the Rejection Document:

- Allow our Depot Management to make the stock available to Fareshare
- Arrange to have Co-op Primary deliver the stock back to you
- Our Depot Management can have the stock destroyed on site
- Collect the stock using your own haulier



We also know it's good to talk, so we'll try and call you to discuss the rejection (using the same Quality Notifications contacts from MyCore). This gives you chance to get more detail from us.



Get in touch:

Andrew Donkin, Depot Quality Manager: Andrew.Donkin@coop.co.uk
Supplier Engagement Team: supplierengagement@coop.co.uk

Delivery Quantity (cases)	Rejection charge
<i>Per case</i>	<i>£10</i>
<i>Minimum charge</i>	<i>£75</i>
<i>Maximum £1000 per SKU per depot cap</i>	

How to raise a query following a rejection:

QUERY:	CONTACT:
Further information / photos	Relevant QC Officer who conducted the assessment (details available on rejection notice)
More detail of quality assessment findings	
Clarify the quantity of cases rejected	
Product specification	Technical Manager
Other	Supplier Engagement Team supplierengagement@coop.co.uk

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