Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia Inc.
ABN 84 816 063 155
PO Box 151 Curtin ACT 2605
www.sfmca.com.au

# 10.1.1. Customer Complaint Process

## Standard

Is there a written customer complaint procedure for registering and investigating problems?
*This should link to recall procedure, see clause 10.3.*

## Purpose

The purpose of a Customer Complaint procedure is to ensure the appropriate steps are taken to collect information, investigate, record and resolve a complaint.

## Reason

The nature of customer complaints varies, however all complaints received should be handled according to the same procedure. The process shall be capable of capturing a broad range of information, which can then be assessed case by case and assigned a classification.

The importance of linking a complaint procedure with the Recall and Corrective actions procedure, is to ensure one system is used to collect information, rectify the deviation and conduct appropriate investigations to prevent reoccurrence.

## What is Acceptable?

When a complaint is received, management shall assess the risk and determine if the recall committee shall be activated. If a recall is triggered then this will take precedence, otherwise the complaint procedure can continue.

The six key stages for a good customer complaint process is:

1. Gather all information from the customer, including photos where possible.
2. Gather all internal information including any other batches affected.
3. Assess the risk rating (trigger a recall if required).
4. Investigate including root cause analysis (trigger corrective action procedure if required).
5. Implement actions and close complaint.
6. Follow up communication with customer and internal documentation.

It is recommended that EVERY complaint is entered into the customer complaints process even if they are not related to quality. Some will require extensive investigation and actions related to the feed safety and quality system, some will just be a business relationship decision with the customer. Keeping records of all of these and reviewing any trends during annual management reviews will provide feedback to the company on where repeat issues are arising and so where cost savings or efficiencies can be gained in the business.

Documents

**Complaints Register**: This will be a log of all complaints including complaint #, date, issue, date closed. This is what can be used by management to review trends, and ensure timely actions taken.

**Complaints Procedure**: To outline the process to follow, training on this procedure for all personnel is recommended.

**Complaints Form/Records**: A form will assist in summarizing the process followed, however there will likely be supporting evidence such as photos, etc which will need to be filed together.

**Complaints Filing**: A system of filing complaints records and documents.

Example Procedure and form can be found below.

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# CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

## 1. PURPOSE

This procedure describes the actions to be taken in the event of a customer complaint or product return.

## 2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all [insert company] products/sales.

The [insert position] is responsible for overseeing the implementation and documentation of each complaint.

## 3. TERMS & DEFINITIONS

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made either verbally or written about the quality of product, the standard of service or lack of action taken by staff, affecting an individual customer or a group of customers.

**Corrective actions**: Actions taken to eliminate the causes of nonconformities and prevent recurrence.

**Feed Safety**: Approach that feed will not cause harm to animals and/or lead to contamination. (*Codex Alimentarius modified)*

**Minor:** Could be a risk that product presents a hazard to animal health or human food products or doesn't meet implied quality standard.

**Moderate:** Risk that product presents a hazard to animal health or human food products or doesn't meet an agreed quality standard.

**Major:** Very real risk that product presents a hazard to animal health or human food products or doesn't meet a regulated quality standard.

**Non-Conformance:** Any non-fulfilment of required specification. Any defect, imperfection or failing against specifications, procedures and/or processes.

**Non-reportable:** There is no risk at all to product feed safety or quality (for example invoice incorrect) or issue was caused by customer themselves with no responsibility on [insert company] (for example customer punctured the container themselves with their forklift).

**Quality**: Degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils documented and agreed requirements.
*(ISO9000:2015 modified)*

## 4. PROCESS

This complaint procedure needs to be followed when any quality-related complaint is received by a customer or product is returned for any reason. If the complaint can be identified as a problem that will impact the safety of the user or the animal, the products registration status, or the products integrity, then the Recall procedure must also be implemented.

### Complaint Received

All complaints received will be entered into the customer complaint logging system whether quality related or not.

All complaints will be documented according to the customer complaint form whether they are received verbally or written. The following information must be recorded at this time:

- Date, time and person receiving complaint.
- Name and contact details of customer raising complaint.
- Nature of complaint.
- Results of tests or other investigations (including photos).
- Details of product (Batch, Product Name, date of manufacture, etc.)
- Any other relevant factors.

## Complaint Classification

The classification will determine the need to initiate a Recall Procedure.

- Risk = potential impact on livestock health, performance, welfare, product quality, human health.
- Severity = potential serious impact on company performance.

| Risk ⇨ Severity ⇩ | High | Low ⇩ |
|---|---|---|
| High | Major * | Moderate |
| Low | Minor | Non-reportable |

*Immediate retrieval from marketplace and notification to relevant authorities. See Fact Sheet 10.3.1 Recall Procedure.

## Complaint Assessed

All complaints will be responded to within 5 working days of receipt (or 24hours if animal or human health at risk). During this time a full assessment and investigation needs to be completed. This could include:

- What is the cause of the concern?
- Have there been other similar complaints?
- Are any other batches or customer affected?
- Has there been a return of product and for what reason? Has this product been isolated?
- What is the impact on the safety of the product?
- Is a recall required?
- Does an insurance claim need to be raised?
- Do the quality systems need to be revised?
- Is there a corrective action to be raised?
- Has the concern been resolved with the customer?

## Complaint Follow Up

All complaints must be followed up to ensure the concern has been resolved with the customer and to ensure any actions to prevent recurrence are effective.

The final customer complaint report/form should include:

- Copy of response letter to customer (if appropriate).
- Circumstances leading to the complaint.
- Actions taken both immediate and corrective action for prevention of recurrence.
- Results of investigation.
- Classification of severity of complaint (eg. quality related minor, or feed safety moderate, or non-reportable).
- Date/time of complaint along with date/time of closeout.

Management reviews will include review of all customer complaints and outcomes including timely close out of required corrective actions. A log of all complaints shall be maintained.

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# 5. DOCUMENTATION & RECORDS

The following records shall be maintained to assure this program is implemented:

- Customer Complaint Records
- Customer Complaint Register
- Corrective Action Forms
- Recall records
- Management Review

# 6. DOCUMENT HISTORY

| *Version* | *Date* | *Description of changes* | *Author* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | dd/mm/yy | Created original document. | name |
| | | | |

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# CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS FORM

Complaint Number: _____

## DESCRIPTION OF COMPLAINT

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Customer Name | | | |
| Customer Contacts | | | |
| Date Received | | Time Received | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Product Name | | Batch Number<br>Formulation | |
| Date of Manufacture | | Date of Expiry | |
| Details of Complaint | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Reported by | |
| Person assigned to investigate | |

## ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINT

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Immediate Actions taken | | | | |
| Investigations and results | | | | |
| Classification* | ☐ Non-Reportable | ☐ Minor | ☐ Moderate | ☐ Major |

*Classification as per Customer Complaints Procedure.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Root Cause | | | |
| Further Corrective Actions taken | | | |
| Feed Safety Assessed? | ☐ Yes ☐ No | Quality System Review? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| Corrective Action? | ☐ Yes ☐ No | Corrective Action # | |
| Product Recall? | ☐ Yes ☐ No | Customer Resolution? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assessed by | | Date | |
| Time Taken to Close Complaint: | | | |

## FOLLOW UP OF COMPLAINT

Has the following been completed and attached:

□ Copy of response letter to customer (if appropriate)

□ Cause identified and described

□ Action taken documented, including non-conformances and recall

□ Investigations & results attached (if appropriate)

□ Future changes made and documented

□ Registers updated

□ All records filed and reported as required

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reviewed by | | Date | |

# DOCUMENT HISTORY

| *Version* | *Date* | *Description of changes* | *Author* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | dd/mm/yy | Created original document. | name |
| | | | |