

LABELLING AND CHEESE SHELF LIFE

Cheeses are labelled for wholesale sale in accordance with relevant legislation and include product name, description, weight, shelf life guidance and contact details for NYD Wholesale. We do not label cheeses in our shops as, for the most part, we expect these cheeses to be eaten within the next week or two.

Use by dates are put on products by the producer and these dates will stay constant throughout the chain. NYD does not determine Use By dates as they relate to the date of production. Best Before dates are applied, where relevant, by NYD and relate to the date of packing at NYD. NYD's Best Before dates are the result of our own rigorous organoleptic testing and with reference to the Specialist Cheesemakers Association Code of Best Practice. Best Before dates are an attempt to put a timeframe on the over-ripening of cheese. As this is highly subjective, we encourage all those handling and consuming our cheese to be aware of any changes that are occurring and to react accordingly. For further information, please consult our cheese care guidelines on our website.

Factors Determining Shelf Life: *Type, Make, Maturing and Transport*

1. Variation between batches in factors such as salt, acidity, and moisture levels, as well as transport and ripening conditions, can make it difficult to establish a consistent shelf life for hand-made cheeses.
2. By tasting every batch of cheese multiple times before it is released for sale, we aim to send it out at peak condition, and to apply a shelf life that will ensure that it will be consumed before its condition starts to deteriorate.
3. We operate according to the principle that food safety is not conferred by a Use By or Best before date but by an absence of initial contamination coupled with subsequent careful handling.
4. To manage these factors and maintain control over cheese quality, Neal's Yard Dairy selects suppliers carefully. We select many of the cheeses ourselves at the farm, and in some cases continue to mature cheese under carefully controlled conditions on our premises. Our Quality System is designed to, as far as possible, eliminate the possibility of contamination of cheese at the farm, during transport, and during maturation, cutting and packing.
5. For an overview of our approach to shelf life, see below

Eating quality issues associated with excessive age	Age of cheese and food safety	How NYD aims to control these risks
<p>Excessive age can result in a decrease in general eating quality due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of ammonia (particularly in soft cheeses) • Development of leathery, thick, or dried-out rinds • Dry, waxy, or crumbly textures associated with excessive desiccation • Bitterness • Accentuation of salty flavours • Unwanted external mould growth • Internal mould growth, mite damage, and bluing in non-blue cheese 	<p>An increase in a cheese's age can both decrease and increase microbiological risks, depending on the type of cheese.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In moist and high-pH soft and blue cheeses, if contamination with <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> occurs during production or maturation, the organism may grow to dangerous levels, regardless of how the cheese is stored. • The legal limit for L mono in cheese at the end of its shelf life is <100 cfu/g (EC/2073/2005) • In hard cheeses with a moderate to high acidity and high salt-in-moisture, aging may ameliorate the risk from toxic <i>E coli</i> species, e.g. <i>E coli</i> O157. 	<p>Neal's Yard Dairy controls the risks to diminution of cheese quality and growth of pathogens through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial selection and approval of all suppliers based on risk assessment, site visits where appropriate, and trust in the cheesemaker and their control over their process • Avoidance of contamination during transport (CCP), maturation, and sale under close supervision by a highly-trained team (prerequisite hygiene and cleaning programmes). • Working practices such as cutting to order and diligent wrapping of cut pieces ensure the best eating quality for the customer. • Absence of contamination in cheeses for sale and effectiveness of cleaning are verified by swabbing and end-product testing at NYD. • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>: while the legal limit at end of shelf life is <100 cfu/g, Neal's Yard Dairy's micro specifications state that cheese that tests positive for L mono is out of specification and may not be sold. Under extraordinary circumstances, an exception may be made by the directors, but only if risk analysis shows that the cheese will conform to legal requirements throughout its shelf life and does not present a risk to the consumer. • While age may be a way to control the risk of toxic <i>E coli</i> species, Neal's Yard Dairy's approach is that the best way to control this risk is to ensure the producers' control over their milk supply, not to rely on the age of cheeses to ensure their safety.

End Use and Customer: In addition to the factors listed above, the following considerations need to be incorporated:

1. Retail outlets, including market stalls and mail order, where cheese is sold directly to the consumer. Product is monitored and selected from stock by an experienced member of staff and, in the shops, finally determined by the cheesemonger.
2. Export to US
 - a. Only batch codes or manufacturing dates are provided. No shelf-life labels have been requested.
3. Wholesale cheeses are monitored and selected from stock by an experienced member of staff.
4. Export to Europe and Rest of World (except US).
 - a. Product is monitored and selected from stock as above. Cheeses are labelled according to legislative requirements.