

## Coseley couple sold crisps and biscuits gnawed by mice to customers, court hears

By Annabal Bagdi, Nov 21, 2017



Husband and wife Ajbinder and Baljit Purewal had displayed nibbled packets of Wotsits, Squares and biscuits for sale in their Coseley store.

Mouse droppings were also uncovered scattered across the premises when health inspectors swarmed the shop. The owners were handed a financial penalty of almost £1,300 after failing to solve the problem.

Sentencing at Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court, District Judge Michael Wheeler said although no-one had been ill there was a 'high risk' they could have been.

Health inspectors swooped on A and B News Convenience and Off Licence after receiving a complaint from a customer who spotted 'evidence' of the mice.

Inspectors discovered the couples were selling 'unsafe' items of food, including five packets of Wotsits, a packet of cheese and onion flavoured Squares and coconut ring biscuits. Mouse droppings on shelves, counters and the floor were found, there was no pest control in place and they failed to ensure staff had food hygiene training, the court heard.

The couples were ordered to close the Poole Crescent shop to rid it of the rodents and 'co-operated' with the investigation.

Both confessed they were aware of the infestation and had been sweeping up the droppings on an 'almost daily' basis, the court was told.

Ajbinder Purewal, 45, told the court the pair closed the business for a week. They emptied and cleaned the shelves, chucking out most of the items for sale.

Wife Baljit Purewal, 41, said the couple noticed mice had been scurrying across their store, ripping open crisps packets and leaving droppings in January. The shop 'got a bit neglected' for a few days when the couple were busy celebrating their daughter's birthday, she said. "This is the first time this has happened, and since then, we clean every day. We are sorry."

She went on to say the couple scoured the store for any holes the mice may have been slipping through but only discovered a small one when pest control turned up.

The mother also blamed the infestation on a neighbouring council house, which had been 'neglected' and had a number of holes.

She added: "Now the council has blocked [the holes]. Since then, we have had no mice, nothing."

Her husband added other parts of the area had also been neglected, with fly tipping seen nearby.

The couple, who earn about £16,000 a year, have since hired pest control to inspect the shop every two months.

The pair, of Poole Crescent, Coseley, admitted five counts of contravening or failing to comply with EU provision concerning food safety and hygiene on January 20. They were each fined £560, with a and told to pay a £56 victim surcharge and £638.67 costs.