



## Inspectors found 27 mice at Liverpool restaurant

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A pest control company retrieved 27 mice from a Liverpool restaurant after it was handed a food hygiene rating of zero.

Health inspectors discovered that Chung Ku posed an 'imminent risk to health' after a visit to the restaurant on August 16, 2019.

After their visit the restaurant was closed voluntarily by its owner, Dove Ross-Williams, for two weeks, during which time a pest control company unveiled an extensive rodent infestation.

Ross-Williams, 57, appeared at Liverpool Magistrates' Court this morning after Liverpool City Council brought a prosecution based on their findings.

He was charged with three counts of breaching food safety and hygiene regulations.

John Ball, prosecuting, explained that on August 16, 2019, at around 11.30am, a Liverpool Council officer from the environmental health team inspected the premises following a complaint from a member of the public "relating to mouse activity".

"Droppings can be seen in a number of locations, most notably under the refrigerator."

Mr Ball explained droppings were also found in the "cooking range area" and "on top of stainless steel shelving where food was stored".

Mr Ball said: "They also discovered a dead mouse underneath one of the food preparation counters."

He told the court there was also a "lack of routine cleaning".

Further inspection also found mouse droppings "on top of bags of sugar" as well as "gaps and holes in a number of locations" as well as marks indicating the presence of mice.

Mr Ball explained that Ross-Williams closed the restaurant voluntarily after the inspection.

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In the meantime a pest control company recovered 27 mice which Mr Ball said suggested a "high level of pest activity".

The court heard inspectors revisited on August 28, 2019, where Chung Ku was given a new food hygiene rating of three - meaning it was now satisfactory.

Mr Ball said the offences were committed "by failing to exercise reasonable care".

Ross-Williams has no previous convictions.

Vicky Balenski, defending, said: "Mr Ross-Williams has engaged with the council when the health inspectors attended."

Explaining the background to the case Ms Balenski said: "Mr Ross-Williams took over the restaurant in January 2019. This is the first time he has ever been involved in the restaurant business."

She said: "It became clear the then current pest controllers weren't dealing with the problem adequately.

"There was a meeting between Mr Ross-Williams and a number of members of staff, the manager and the assistant head chef.

"As a result of those conversations the contract with the then current pest controllers was terminated and the manager and assistant head chef resigned."

Ms Balenski explained a new pest control company was hired around a month prior to the health inspectors' visit.

She said: "Whilst it was known there was an issue the parties were doing everything they could and making changes to try and address the problem."

She added: "He was doing the best he could and did take steps to address it."

Ms Balenski confirmed that he voluntarily closed the restaurant for two weeks after the inspection to allow work to be completed.

he court heard Ross-Williams isn't the proprietor but leases the property.

Ross-Williams was charged with three counts of failing to comply with food safety and hygiene regulations.

District Judge James Clarke, sentencing, said that there was a "very obvious" problem which had required "active engagement".

The district judge said: "A degree of risk was taken here to be aware of the problem and to continue to trade at the time when effectively closure was what was required."

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District Judge Clarke said he took into account that Mr Ross-Williams has no previous convictions, entered an early guilty plea and considered his personal financial circumstances.

Ross-Williams was ordered to pay a fine and costs totalling £3050.

A spokesman for Liverpool City Council said: "In August 2019 a member of the public complained to the Environmental Health Service at the City Council about rodent activity within the dining room at the premises.

"An unannounced food hygiene inspection was carried out by an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) in order to investigate the complaint and to carry out an inspection.

"During the 16 th August 2019 inspection, a dead mouse was found beneath catering equipment in the restaurants kitchen and mouse droppings were found on food preparation surfaces next to catering equipment and crockery, mouse droppings were found on floor surfaces under cooking equipment and fridge/freezers.

"The kitchen was unclean with a build-up of food debris and grease which provided a food source for pests