

Farm Direct Marketing Eggs: What You Need to Know

The provincial egg regulation, the *Purchase and Sale of Eggs and Processed Egg Regulation*, affects the sale of eggs direct to end consumers.

According to the regulation, uninspected, ungraded eggs can be sold directly to consumers for their own personal use provided that:

- the eggs are produced on the producer's own farm
- the eggs are clean, have no visible cracks and are not leaking
- the eggs are kept at an ambient temperature of 7° C or less
- the eggs are packed in clean containers that are conspicuously labeled with the word "UNINSPECTED" in letters that are at least 2 centimeters in height

What does this mean?

Uninspected, ungraded eggs must only be sold by the producer and cannot be sold by an intermediary. The eggs can only be sold to the end consumer and not to anyone who will use them as ingredients in products they will in turn sell to the end consumer.

For example, uninspected, ungraded eggs cannot be sold to chefs for use in their restaurants, to caterers for use in their catering businesses, to owners of bed and breakfasts for use in their breakfasts or to bakers at the farmers' market who will use them as an ingredient in their baking destined for sale at the farmers' market. Uninspected, ungraded eggs can also not be used by the producer as an ingredient in a product destined for sale to the end consumer.

Cracked eggs cannot be sold because of food safety concerns. Research has shown that

cracked eggs can become contaminated very quickly, especially if laid in dirty egg boxes. Once contaminated, the egg contents can't be sterilized by normal practices such as washing.

Eggs must be kept at a holding temperature not exceeding 7° C. If selling at a farmers' market, this means that all of a vendor's eggs should not be sitting out on the table because the ambient air temperature is too warm. One carton can be displayed to attract customers' attention, but the eggs for sale should be held in a cooler that can maintain the cool temperatures. Eggs in an open refrigeration unit can be displayed provided the air temperature around the eggs is less than 7° C.

Egg containers can be recycled provided they are clean and free of contaminants. Remember that according to the federal Egg Regulations, containers that are labeled with a grade, such as Canada A Large, can't be used unless the eggs have been graded at an inspected egg grading station. If uninspected eggs are being sold in recycled cartons, the grade must be covered up. According to labelling regulations, the name of the grading station on recycled egg cartons should

also be covered. Cartons must also be labelled with the producer's name and address.

Farmers' market managers should be ensuring that all egg vendors are in compliance with federal and provincial regulations.

Handling eggs

Eggs are a perishable food and must be handled properly so they don't pose any food safety risks. Improper handling also reduces the quality of the egg.

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Eggs should be washed with clean water as soon as they are collected. The temperature of the wash water should be around 43° C. The temperature of the wash water is important; if too cold the egg can draw harmful bacteria into the egg. Never let eggs sit in the wash water. Change the wash water as needed to ensure proper cleaning. Remember that the egg bucket washers also need to be washed, rinsed and sanitized between egg water changes which should be after every second washing.

Immediately after the eggs are washed, they should be dunked into a sanitizing solution. Household bleach is a commonly used sanitizer. Five milliliters of bleach into one litre (5 ml/L) of water makes a safe solution. This solution should also be at 43° C.

Once the eggs are washed and sanitized, they should be quickly air dried and packaged. Promptly refrigerate the eggs at a temperature not exceeding 7° C, and keep them refrigerated up to the time they are sold.

Provide your customers with a little extra value and remind them to get their eggs home as soon as possible and place them into the refrigerator. Eggs should be kept in the main body of the fridge, where they can be kept at a more constant, colder temperature and not in the door.

Need more information?

If you need more information about how to produce and handle eggs or any poultry product safely, contact Dr. Colleen Christianson at 403-948-8575 or Dr. Delores Peters at 780-427-7501, Animal Health Branch, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

For more information about the *Purchase and Sale of Eggs and Processed Egg Regulation*, contact the inspection and investigation branch, regulatory services division, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, at 403-755-1474. Dial 310-0000 first for toll-free access.

This factsheet was prepared by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

For more information, contact

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