

Best Industry Practices for Small Flock Egg Handling and Selling



Do I need My Eggs Graded?

For eggs sold beyond the farm gate or farm residency, it is a best industry practice to have them go through a grading facility certified by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Grading facilities focus their attention on egg cleanliness, weight, interior quality and shell structure to ensure safety for consumers.

The requirements from federally registered egg grading facilities are that the eggs are clean and free of leaks, cracks or other possible food safety issues.

BEFORE CLEANING

If eggs are not sent to a certified grading facility, it is a best industry practice to candle and wash the eggs as it allows for better food safety observations.

HOW SHOULD I CLEAN MY EGGS?

A best industry practice is to not refrigerate the eggs before cleaning. If an egg is exposed to cooler temperatures when there is still dirt or manure on it, the shell will absorb bacteria through the pores and contaminate the egg.

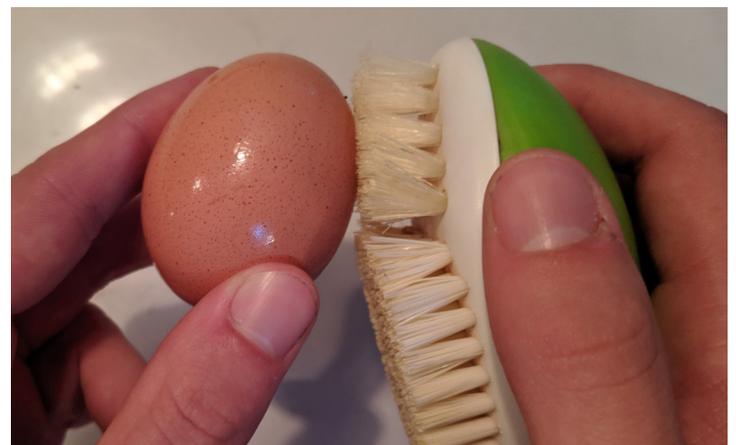
By cleaning the eggs as soon as possible it reduces possible contamination.

Potable water (safe for drinking) should be used to clean eggs. If well water is used, it is recommended that the water be tested on a yearly basis to ensure safety.

Egg washing temperature should be about 10 degrees warmer than the egg, as the warm temperature will close the pores and drive away bacteria that may be on the shell.

It is best not to let eggs rest in water because they can absorb contaminants that may be in the water.

If there is no access to an egg washing machine then a best industry practice is to scrub dirt or manure off the eggs with a brush that has short and fine bristles. Avoid using a cloth to wipe the eggs, as it can spread contaminants.



Once cleaned, the eggs should be dried and placed in a cool storage area, preferably at 4°C.

Cracked eggs or eggs with excessive contamination on the shell pose a food safety risk and should be discarded.

WHY CANDLE MY EGGS

The candling process is done by closely holding a bright LED light to the egg while in a dark room to analyze the egg for:

- ▶ The absence of fine shell cracks;
- ▶ Membrane damage;
- ▶ A reasonably well centered yolk;
- ▶ The absence of meat or blood spots.



HOW TO STORE MY EGGS

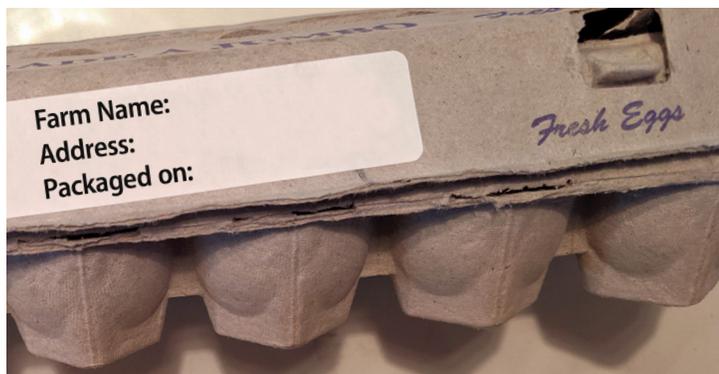
Eggs should be stored in cooler temperatures <10°C and 70–75% relative humidity.

Keep the storage area clean and free of odorous materials, as eggs can absorb odors through the shell.

It is best to keep the pointed end of the egg down in the tray to keep the air cell steady.

LABELLING AND PACKAGING THE EGGS

To avoid contamination, a best industry practice is to keep egg trays off the ground. It is also best not to reuse egg trays and use egg trays that are only from your farm.



Proper labelling of the trays is important for food safety traceability; label the trays with the farm name, address and the date that they were packaged. Any labeling on the trays from another egg grader or farm should be completely removed or covered, as it can lead to confusion over the source of the eggs.

RECORD KEEPING

For quality assurance it is best industry practice to record the temperature of the storage area. Temperature should be recorded daily.

Recording egg production and any mortality daily can help determine the health of the flock.

If a problem does arise concerning flock health, daily records help to see when the problem started.

RESOURCES

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY: EGG GRADING

<https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/information-for-consumers/fact-sheets-and-infographics/products-and-risks/dairy-eggs-and-honey/egg-grading/eng/1332271593213/1332271655324>

BC GAP: EGG HANDLING

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/food-safety/good-agricultural-practices/9-4-egg-handling>

BC CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL: TEMPORARY FOOD MARKETS

http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/EH/FPS/Food/Guidelines%20-%20Sale%20of%20Foods%20at%20Temporary%20Food%20Markets_current.pdf

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