Proper Handling and Transportation of Eggs for Sale at Kentucky Farmers’ Markets

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Proper Handling and Transportation of Eggs for Sale at Kentucky Farmers’ Markets

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Regardless of the number of eggs produced, and whether the eggs are for home use or sale, careful egg handling is very important. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) lists eggs as a potentially hazardous food, therefore careful handling is important. In Kentucky, if you sell more than 60 dozen eggs a week you need to purchase a retail license. The same holds true if you want to sell your eggs to a retail store to be re-sold or to a distributor that will sell them for you. If you produce fewer than 60 dozen eggs a week and sell directly to consumers, you do not need a license but must follow all the same safe handling guidelines and regulations.

After an egg is laid, it becomes exposed to the environment within the poultry house. Here it can pick up a variety of different types of bacteria. Most have no health risks. Some organisms, however, can cause egg spoilage while others can cause food poisoning. Salmonella bacteria are found in the digestive tract of all animals and can contaminate the poultry houses. Some types of salmonella cause food poisoning in humans. Eggs may become contaminated with salmonella, requiring that the eggs be handled and processed with care.

The following guidelines should be followed:

- Make sure your hands are clean when you collect eggs.
- Gather eggs as often as possible and wash them as soon as possible after collection.
- Remove badly soiled and cracked eggs before they are washed.
- Eggs should be below 90°F before washing and the wash water temperature should be between 110°-120°F.
- Never use wash water that is more than 50°F above the temperature of the egg as this will cause cracking of the shell.
- Wash the eggs in running water and avoid submerging eggs.
- Never put wet eggs into cartons or boxes because wet eggs can pick up bacteria easily.

You must use new egg cartons that meet the correct labelling requirements. They must be labelled with nutritional information, refrigeration requirements and safe handling instructions, in addition to the producer name and address and date of packaging. You may not reuse egg cartons.

All table eggs must be stored below 45°F (7.2°C), including during transport and display for sale. Random spot-checks are common at farmers' markets and any eggs that are found to be above the minimum temperature will be seized and destroyed without compensation. You will be required to show a Safe-handling Instructions

To prevent illness from bacteria: Keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.

Nutrition Facts

Source: American Egg Board
thermometer to prove your eggs are stored at the correct temperature.

If you are selling your eggs at a farmers’ market, a chest-type cooler can be used (Figure 4). It is important, however, that the eggs never come into contact with the ice or the water from the melted ice.

A divider between the eggs and the area that holds the ice is required and there must be at least three inches between the eggs and the ice.

A divider like the one in Figure 1 is relatively inexpensive and easy to make. The dimensions can be adjusted to fit the size of the cooler.

To create the divider, all you need is a piece of hardware cloth cut to the size of the cooler (see Figure 2). Remove a section of each corner so that it can be folded into a shelf to fit over the two pieces of 2x4 lumber, as shown in Figure 3.