

## EGGS IN THE SHELL



The general rule is that all animal products – meat, poultry, eggs, etc. – donated to an Emergency Food Organizations (EFO) must meet the same standards as animal products sold in a retail store. There are a few exceptions to this rule for some lower risk foods. Donors and EFOs can take steps to help assure that a well-intended contribution can be safely delivered to people in need. This guide addresses donations for eggs in the shell.

The increase in backyard flocks has led to an increase in the number of hobby farmers wanting to donate excess eggs to local food banks or pantries. However, eggs are a high-risk product for food-borne illness. Therefore, the only eggs an EFO can accept are those produced and handled according to the rules for eggs going to a retail outlet or farmers market.

The federal government regulates egg producers with more than 3,000 birds; the State regulates egg producers with fewer birds that sells or gives away eggs off-farm. Egg producers selling eggs directly to consumers at their farm or through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program are not required to obtain a license if consumers pick up CSA from the farm. In order to verify processing of the eggs, however, an EFO can accept eggs only from federal and state-regulated egg producers, not those for on-farm sales.

# EGGS IN THE SHELL

## Donations Guide

### Farmer/Producer

Egg producers with less than 3,000 birds must obtain an egg handler/dealer license to legally donate eggs to an EFO. This license includes an inspection of the facilities used in the handling of the eggs. The facility must include a work area, designated storage, potable water, a hand-washing station and a refrigerator that are not used as part of the domestic residence.

### Processing

Producers must clean and refrigerate eggs in accordance with WSDA's Shell Egg Producer's Guidelines for Off-Farm Sales.

### Packages and Labels

Eggs must be in a new package and container bearing a label with the following information:

- The word "eggs," identification of the bird that laid the egg if it was not a chicken ("duck eggs");
- The quantity of eggs in the container;
- The name and address of the egg producer;
- The statement: "Keep Refrigerated";
- The statement "SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS: To prevent illness from bacteria: Keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.";
- If chicken eggs, the grade and size of the eggs (when properly determined);



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A person with a small flock would be able to donate by obtaining an egg handler/dealer license and complying with food safety regulations and guidelines.

To the right, you will see a step-by-step guide for donating eggs in the shell to an Emergency Food Organization (EFO). Please work with your Food Safety Contact at each step to ensure safe and wholesome donation.

**EFO:** Emergency Food Organization (food banks, food pantries, meal programs)

**WSDA:** WA Department of Agriculture

**Jurisdiction:** Local or county health department or district



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**AGR PUB 609-561 (R/4/19)**

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Please call the WSDA Receptionist at 360-902-1976 or TTY 800-833-6388.

- A clearly readable “Pull Date” or “Best By” date showing the month and day (e.g. June 14 or 06 14);
- Either an “egg seal,” which is a green, circular label stuck on the box, or permanent dealer’s number, a number starting with WA- or 53- printed on the box.

## Private Citizen

An EFO must not accept eggs from a private citizen without an egg handler’s license as the EFO cannot sufficiently verify proper handling of this high-risk food (even if the donor is known to the EFO as a decent and reliable person).

An EFO can accept eggs that a private citizen purchased at a retail establishment if the eggs have not exceeded the “pull date” or “best by” date.

## Transportation/Storage

Eggs must be transported in a manner to maintain a temperature of 41°F or less until eggs are distributed to consumers. Local health jurisdictions have oversight of retail stores/food banks and they may require additional permits or inspections. Please check with your local health jurisdiction to ensure compliance.

## A Note About the Good Samaritan Donation Act

RCW 69.80.031 offers food donors protection from criminal and civil liability. The act, however, is not a “get-out-of-jail-free” card relieving donors and EFOs of the duty of acting responsibly. The act requires that the donated food be “apparently wholesome.” Animal products can look just fine but still carry E. coli, salmonella or other disease. Therefore, verifying whether animal products are, in fact, “apparently wholesome” requires knowing whether the food has been handled in accordance with suitable food safety standards.