



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE

SAFE EGG HANDLING PRACTICES FOR SMALL PRODUCERS

Practicing good poultry management is the key to producing quality eggs. The first step is to start with healthy chickens. All poultry and hatching eggs in the state must be sold with certification proving they originated from disease-free flocks, which is accomplished through a National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) test administered by the Mississippi Board of Animal Health. Additionally, handling areas should generally be clean and free of insects, vermin, and other possible contaminants.

Freshness is a factor of both time and temperature. Eggs should be collected at least twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. Collection should be more frequent in very hot or very cold weather. Removing eggs from nesting boxes promptly helps keep eggs intact and clean. Broken and cracked eggs should be discarded.

Clean eggs do not need to be washed. A slightly dirty egg can be brushed with an egg brush or rubbed with a sanding sponge and sandpaper. If eggs need to be washed, do not allow the eggs to sit or soak in water. Washing should take place with a continuous flow of water, such as dipping, spraying, or pouring, allowing water to drain away from the eggs. The water must be at least 20°F warmer than the egg and at least 90°F. When using an egg wash or sanitizer, follow all instructions. (If the wash water comes from a private well, the water must be tested every year for bacteria. For water tests, contact the Mississippi State Department of Health's Water Supply Division at 601-576-7518.)

There are many detergents or egg soaps on the market. For example, Egg Wash Powder is an alkaline chlorinated foam controlled powder available through Incredible Egg Washing Co., Nasco, and other suppliers.

Eggs should be dried after washing and before packing and storing to prevent fungal and microbial growth. Eggs can be dried by evaporation, with fan assistance, or by wiping.

Collected eggs should be held between 33°F and 45°F to decrease bacterial growth. It is not advised to store eggs near items with strong odors. These odors can be absorbed and give the egg an "off" flavor.

For information on labeling, grading, sizing, candling, or transporting eggs, please contact the Consumer Protection Division.

Contacts: Consumer Protection Division, P.O. Box 1609, Jackson, MS 39215; 601-359-1148; cp@mdac.ms.gov
Board of Animal Health, P.O. Box 3889, Jackson, MS 3920; 601-359-1170

Sources: <http://sd.appstate.edu/sites/sd.appstate.edu/files/egghandling.pdf>
<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/animal-health/poultry/safe-egg-handling-for-backyard-egg-producers.pdf>

