



Egg safety in Canada

Food safety is of paramount importance to Canadians. Consumers insist on and deserve food that is nutritious, affordable and most of all, safe.

Canada's egg producers are dedicated to providing consumers with eggs that meet the highest standards of safety and quality. The Canadian industry's adherence to these standards has paid off; our egg producers are global leaders in the development of on-farm health and safety practices and Canadian eggs are recognized as among the safest in the world.

Nature's safety defences

The egg is naturally one of the safest, if not the safest foods. Nature's design offers three lines of defence to protect the egg from food-borne infection: the hard calcium shell, two membrane layers and natural antimicrobials in the albumen or egg white.

Improve on nature

The Canadian Egg Marketing Agency and its provincial-territorial partners have worked to improve on the egg's natural safety with several measures.

The HACCP-based Start Clean-Stay Clean™ program, which is in place at the farm level in Canada, is considered a global model and complies with internationally recognized safety standards. HACCP principles ensure that potential hazards in production are analyzed and critical control points for reducing or eliminating hazards are identified. Federal and provincial officers conduct inspections at the farm to advise on the Start Clean-Stay Clean™ safety guidelines. Start Clean-Stay Clean™ completed technical review by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in 2004.

Additionally, testing to detect the presence of Salmonella enteritidis (SE) in layer barns has been instituted in all 10 provinces and the Northwest Territories. If a positive environmental sample is confirmed in a layer barn, eggs are diverted directly to an egg breaker where they are broken and then pasteurized, even though none of the eggs is likely to have the pathogen. Pasteurization kills SE. The eggs are then sold as liquid, frozen or dried eggs and used in a variety of foods.

The Canadian Egg Marketing Agency compensates farmers who must depopulate their barns early as a result of finding SE, which ensures that producers who act in the best interests of consumers and their industry are not harmed financially.



Other safety measures include:

- All Canadian egg-grading stations are federally registered and subject to federal regulations and regular inspection.
- Graders and processors in Canada are also implementing HACCP programs to maximize safety.
- Cooling is stressed at the farm, the grading station and the retail level to keep eggs fresh.
- United States eggs imported into Canada for sale at grocery stores and restaurants must be processed at U.S. stations approved by the Canadian government. These U.S. stations must meet the same safety standards as Canadian grading stations.

Safe handling of eggs from gate to plate

While producers, distributors and retailers work to implement safety standards at all levels, it must not be forgotten that consumers also have an important role to play.

Consumers can help ensure safety and quality in eggs by practicing safe handling steps, including:

- Store eggs in body of the refrigerator in their original carton not in the door, even if there is an egg tray.
- Wash hands with hot, soapy water before and after food preparation.
- Serve eggs and egg-rich foods immediately after cooking or refrigerate and serve within three to four days.
- When refrigerating large amounts of egg-rich foods or leftovers, divide into several shallow containers to ensure rapid cooling.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. To ensure freshness and quality, food should be prepared in small batches.

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