

RESPONSIBILITIES

As an egg producer, you're responsible for managing the food safety hazards that arise from the time eggs are laid until they leave your control. Proper egg production and handling will help make sure your eggs are safe for human consumption.

As a producer, you must:

- control the food safety hazards associated with egg production
- keep records of eggs sold or given away

You're responsible for complying with the production and processing standards for eggs and egg products set by Food Standards Australia. To do this:

- look after the health and hygiene of your birds
- collect eggs soon after laying
- handle and clean eggs carefully
- check eggs for faults
- never sell or give away cracked or dirty eggs
- package and label your eggs properly
- store and transport your eggs safely.

DPIRD REGISTRATION & BIOSECURITY

The DPIRD registration requirement will apply to owners of 50 or more poultry – domestic chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea fowl, quail, pigeons, pheasants and partridges.

To register, update details and get information on the regulations visit www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-movement-ID

Protective clothing (eg overalls, boot covers, dust masks) should be supplied to all staff and visitors to minimise external contamination.

The bird mortality rate should be monitored as an indicator of disease within the flock. A mortality limit should be identified and documented (eg 0.1% mortalities per month). If the limit is exceeded, details of an investigation and any corrective action taken should be recorded.

FOOD ACT 2008

Anyone offering food to the public should investigate their responsibility under the Food Act 2008 as sale is defined broadly in the legislation.

Before operating a food business, you need to register or notify your business with the relevant enforcement agency, this is in most cases the Local Government. This includes temporary food businesses such as a market stall, mobile food vans, home based food businesses and fundraisers.

When setting up a food business (even at home) you must be sure you will meet what is required by the [Food Act 2008](#), [Food Regulations 2009](#), and *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*. For help navigating these requirements, please refer to [the Food Safe Australia guide to the Food Safety Standards](#)

FOOD STANDARDS CODE

[Standard 4.2.5 – Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg Products \(Standard 4.2.5\) \(external site\)](#) has been developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand in response to food-borne illness outbreaks suspected of being linked to eggs and egg products.

Some of the key requirements of Standard 4.2.5 include:

FSMS

An egg producer or processor must develop and implement a Food Safety Management Statement (FSMS). The FSMS will demonstrate compliance with the standard, by systematically examining its production activities, identifying potential hazards, and implementing control measures.

The FSMS must be recognised by the relevant enforcement agency. For product intended for the domestic market, this would be the local government enforcement agency where the egg producer or processor is located.

Unacceptable Eggs

An unacceptable egg is defined as one which is cracked and/or dirty, has not been processed by pasteurisation or by an equivalent process or contains a pathogenic micro-organism.

An egg producer must not sell or supply unacceptable eggs unless they are to be either cleaned or processed by pasteurisation or an equivalent process by the egg processor.

Unique Identifier

Egg producers must not sell eggs or egg products unless each individual egg or each package or container of egg pulp is marked with the producer's unique identifier. Standard 4.2.5 clauses 10 and 20 describes the requirements for a unique identifier.

Central Register

The Food Unit manages a central register of unique identifiers. Food businesses for which Standard 4.2.5 applies will need to contact the Food Unit to either obtain or to have an existing unique identifier for the marking of eggs and egg products to be listed in the register. As part of your egg stamping application, you will be asked to provide a copy of your food business certificate of registration, issued under the Food Act 2008 by your local government.

Compliance with the food safety standards are intended to reduce contamination levels of pathogenic bacteria and contaminants in food, especially, *Salmonella* on and in eggs and various other pathogens such as *Campylobacter* known to be associated with eggs

GENERAL INFORMATION

Construction

The construction and layout of a food premise must be designed to minimise the opportunity for food contamination.

Small egg farms must ensure that their food premises, fixtures, fittings, equipment, and transport vehicles are designed and constructed in a manner that means they can be easily cleaned and, where necessary, sanitised.

Businesses must also ensure that the premises are provided with the necessary services of water, waste disposal, light, ventilation, cleaning and personal hygiene facilities, storage space and access to toilets.

Full requirements are set out in the Food Standards Code, Chapter 3, [Standard 3.2.3 - Food Premises and Equipment](#) and the FSANZ guide [Safe Food Australia](#).

Egg safety facts

Everyone who uses, sells, or distributes eggs should be aware of the following egg safety facts:

- Cooking eggs and food containing eggs until they are hot all the way through to 75 degrees Celsius kills any bacteria that may be present. This is especially important when serving eggs to pregnant women, young children, elderly people, and anyone with low immunity.
- When eggshells are dirty, bacteria can contaminate eggs. Washing eggs can make it easier for bacteria to penetrate the porous shell. Dirty eggs should be thrown away.
- You cannot tell by sight or smell whether an egg is contaminated with bacteria. Any bacteria present on the outside of an egg can enter the egg through cracks in the shell, causing a potential health risk. Large eggs are more likely to crack than small ones.
- Observing an egg with a light source behind it can help reveal the presence of cracks in the shell.
- Eggs require the same level of care as other perishable foods like chicken, seafood, meat, and dairy products.
- Food should be used before the best-before or use-by date and for eggs this is normally 28 days after packing. Eggs are much more potentially hazardous after 42 from packing.
- There is no way of knowing whether there are bacteria in or on an egg. Clean eggs are less likely to be contaminated. Refrigeration slows bacterial growth. Thorough cooking kills bacteria.
- Eggs should be kept in the fridge in their carton so you can keep track of the best-before date.

FOOD POISONING AND EGGS

Salmonella poisoning and campylobacteriosis can be a very serious illness, particularly for:

- infants
- elderly people
- pregnant women
- people with reduced immunity.

Summer is the prime time for infection.

People can become ill with salmonella or campylobacteriosis by eating contaminated food, drinking contaminated water, or having contact with infected animals. Eating undercooked poultry, eggs, or cross contamination of foods, such as using the same cutting board or utensils for raw poultry or meat and vegetables without washing, are common ways to be infected.

Even one drop of juice from raw poultry, egg or meat can have enough Campylobacter or Salmonella in it to infect a person. Campylobacter is one of the top 5 notified illnesses in the Wheatbelt and WA Health identified a main source of outbreaks of Salmonella in WA linked to consumption of egg dishes.

Raw egg risk

In many egg-associated salmonella outbreaks in commercial premises, raw eggs were used as an ingredient in foods that were not further cooked.

Examples of foods containing raw eggs include:

- mayonnaise
- aioli
- salad dressings
- hollandaise sauces
- egg nogg
- health shakes with added raw egg
- chocolate mousse, tiramisu, and other desserts.

Food proprietors need to understand that eggs can be a source of salmonella, and they need to take the same precautions with eggs as they would with chicken, meat, seafood, and dairy foods, to reduce the risk of food poisoning. Raw dishes with a pH below 4.5 may effectively prevent the growth of Salmonella bacteria.

Egg storage

You should always store eggs inside the carton you bought them in, inside the fridge. Egg shells are porous, and the carton helps protect the eggs from any potential contamination and condensation.

The only eggs that can be kept at room temperature are freshly harvested eggs that haven't been washed and processed or refrigerated.

Science tells us that refrigerating eggs can assist reduce the risk of Salmonella but condensation on eggs caused by temperature fluctuations can increase the risk. It is recommended to store eggs below 16°C.

The delay in the growth of Salmonella in eggs has been found to be temperature dependent. For eggs held at room temperature, growth may be inhibited for 2 to 3 weeks. Conversely, for eggs stored at 37°C, growth may occur in a few days.

This effect is the result of a temperature and time dependent breakdown in the integrity of the vitelline membrane of the egg. As eggs age weakening of this membrane allows bacteria to migrate from the albumen into the yolk, or the leakage of yolk contents into the albumen. These changes have been suggested to be factors that can lead to significant growth of Salmonella in eggs.

It's estimated that the period where natural inhibitory and physical barriers prevent salmonella from multiplying within an egg for eggs stored at 16°C is 26 days and for those stored at 20°C, 17 days.

Risk increases 8-fold for uncooked and lightly cooked foods prepared from eggs stored at other temperatures once the has been exceeded.

Once previously cold eggs begin to warm, condensation forms on the outside of the shell, encouraging the growth bacteria present on the surface of the egg. Temperature changes also provide a path that allows bacteria to move through the porous eggshell directly into the interior of the egg. Eggs should always be stored in a cool dry part of the fridge where the temperature is the most stable.