

## EGGS IN THE SHELL



In general, 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. Both donors and EFOs should take steps to make sure food is safe for clients. This guide addresses donations for raw eggs in the shell.

Eggs are a high-risk product for foodborne illness. Therefore, EFOs can only accept cage free eggs produced and handled according to WAC 246-215 (the Retail Food Code). EFOs cannot accept eggs from backyard flocks or hobby farmers unless they are licensed.

USDA and WSDA both regulate egg producers with more than 3,000 birds. Egg producers with less than 3,000 birds are licensed by the State Department of Revenue and inspected by the WSDA Food Safety Program. Egg producers selling eggs directly to consumers at a farm stand on their own farm are not required to obtain a license. EFOs can only accept eggs from federal and state-regulated egg producers who have the Washington State egg, handler, dealer, license.

People with small flocks may donate eggs by obtaining an egg handler/dealer license and complying with food safety regulations.

# WASHINGTON STATE RAW EGGS IN SHELL Donations Guide

## Farmer/Producer

Egg producers with more than 3,000 birds are regulated by both USDA and WSDA. USDA grademarks (AA, A, B) may be present. All egg producers distributing eggs in Washington must obtain an egg handler/dealer license from the Department of Revenue to sell or donate eggs. Egg handlers must have a designated work area, storage, potable water, a hand-washing station, and refrigeration not used as part of a domestic residence. State-licensed egg handlers can be verified with Department of Revenue ([secure.dor.wa.gov/gteunauth](https://secure.dor.wa.gov/gteunauth)).

Egg producers must also pay an assessment for each dozen eggs. Proof of the producer paying the assessment is made by affixing an “egg seal” (green circular sticker) to each carton of eggs, or by paying monthly using the egg producer’s XXX53 number. These are administered by WSDA Food Safety.

## Processing

Producers must clean and refrigerate eggs in accordance with WSDA’s Shell Egg Producer’s Guidelines for Off-Farm Sales ([agr.wa.gov/departments/food-safety/food-safety/eggs](http://agr.wa.gov/departments/food-safety/food-safety/eggs)).

## Packages and labels

Eggs must be in a new and unused package or container with a label containing the following:

- The word “eggs” and, if not a chicken, the type of bird that laid the eggs (“duck eggs”).
- The number of eggs in the container.
- The name and address of the egg producer.
- The statement: “Keep Refrigerated.”



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

**FOOD  
ASSISTANCE**



Find your local health jurisdiction at [doh.wa.gov/about-us/washingtons-public-health-system/washington-state-local-health-jurisdictions](https://doh.wa.gov/about-us/washingtons-public-health-system/washington-state-local-health-jurisdictions).

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

**WSDA:** WA Department of Agriculture

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

**RCW:** Revised Code of Washington

**WAC:** Washington Administrative Code



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

**Food Safety and  
Consumer Services Division**

**Food Assistance**

[foodassistance@agr.wa.gov](mailto:foodassistance@agr.wa.gov)

[agr.wa.gov/services/food-access](https://agr.wa.gov/services/food-access)

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- 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).
- A clear and readable “Pull By” or “Best By” date showing the month and day (ex. June 14 or 06/14).
- Proof of egg assessment payment. (Look for a green “egg seal” of the XXX53 number on every carton or box of donated eggs.)
- Chicken eggs from flocks of 3,000 or more birds must be cage free per RCW 69.25.

## Private citizen donations

An EFO may not accept eggs from a private citizen if they do not have a valid egg handler’s license (even if the donor is known to the EFO as a decent and reliable person).

An EFO may accept unbroken eggs purchased at a retail establishment if the eggs are not past the pull date or best by date.

## Transportation and storage

Eggs must be stored and transported at a temperature of 45°F or less until eggs are distributed to consumers. Thermometers should be used at all stages of storage and transport for any meat and/or egg product.

Local health jurisdictions have oversight of retail stores and EFOs. 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. However, it does not relieve donors and EFOs of their duty to act responsibly. The Act requires donated food be “apparently wholesome.” Animal products can visually look fine but still carry E. coli, Salmonella, or other illness-causing microbes. Food donors and EFOs should be able to help verify whether food is “apparently wholesome” by knowing the food safety standards and how the food was handled before donation.