

Guidance for Retailers

on Handling and Storage of Shell Eggs in Retail Premises

The correct labelling, handling and storage of shell eggs can help ensure egg quality, freshness and shelf life and avoid the risk of cross contamination.

The following guidelines are aimed at providing guidance to retailers on best practice for sourcing, labelling, handling and storing shell eggs and to assist in compliance with legislative requirements.

Source

When sourcing eggs and accepting deliveries of eggs, retailers should take the following into consideration:

- Eggs should be sourced from a supplier registered by the Department of Agriculture and Food or by an equivalent body in another EU Member State. Each egg is required to have the registration number stamped on it from January 1st 2004.
- It is recommended that eggs produced under the Bord Bia Egg Quality Assurance Scheme (EQAS), or an equivalent scheme, are sourced. These eggs have the quality assurance logo stamped on each egg.

Handling

- Eggs that are broken, cracked or damaged, or egg packaging that is soiled, should be removed from sale with care taken to avoid the contamination of other eggs or packaging. Breakages or spillages should be cleaned up immediately. Damaged eggs and eggs past their 'sell by' date should be disposed of appropriately and should not be consumed.
- Eggs should not be washed or wiped, as this increases the risk of contamination.
- Before and after the handling of eggs or egg packaging, staff should wash their hands.

Labelling

Eggs sold in packs must have the following displayed on the packaging:

- Name, address and identification number (approval number) of the packing centre
- Quality class and weight grade of the eggs
- 'Best before' date
- Number of eggs in the pack
- Advice to consumers to keep eggs refrigerated after purchase
- An indication of farming method (from January 1st 2004).

Where eggs are not sold in packs, retailers are required to display labelling information with each batch of eggs. This labelling must be clearly visible to the customer and should include:

- Identification number (approval number) of the packing centre
- 'Best before' date
- Advice to consumers to keep eggs refrigerated after purchase
- An indication of farming method (from January 1st 2004).

Note: A batch is defined as "eggs from the same source with the same 'best before' date and the same quality and weight grading."

Storage

- Eggs must be sold at least 7 days before the 'best before' date.**
- Where there is also a 'sell by' or 'display until' date on the label, eggs must be sold by this date.**
- Stock should be rotated to ensure that eggs are sold within these dates.
- There should be good air circulation around the egg packaging.
- Eggs should not be stored next to direct heat sources such as refrigerators. Eggs should be stored at a consistent temperature to ensure optimal conservation of their quality. Ideally, the storage temperature should be less than 20°C. High temperatures encourage moisture loss and quality reduction.
- Eggs should be stored away from sources of strong odours, e.g. detergents, onions or oranges, as egg shells are porous and can therefore pick up odours.
- To avoid cross contamination, eggs should not come into contact with uncovered foods.
- The egg storage and display areas should be kept clean and tidy.

It is recommended that these guidelines are incorporated into staff training programmes.

The EC (Marketing Standards for Eggs) Regulations, 1992 (S.I. No. 254 of 1992) outline the legal requirements for the marketing of eggs in Ireland. This poster provides supplementary information relating to labelling, food hygiene and food safety.

