



Labelling and Hygiene Guidelines for Producers of Small Quantities of Hen Eggs

Egg producers must comply with various pieces of legislation. This factsheet outlines a summary of the labelling and hygiene requirements for producers supplying small quantities of table eggs from laying hens. It is necessary to comply with these requirements to ensure safety, traceability, egg quality and freshness.

Registration

All flock owners must be registered under animal health legislation with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF). Application forms can be accessed on www.agriculture.gov.ie or by contacting DAFF at Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 (Ph 01-6072000).

Hygiene Requirements

Like all food producers, egg producers must comply with the general principle that they ensure that the eggs are safe.

Egg producers for whom the EU hygiene legislation is applicable must comply with (EC) Regulation 852/2004 (Annex 1). Some of the main hygiene requirements relate to:

- Record keeping
- Clean equipment and facilities
- Potable water/clean water where necessary
- Pest control
- Protection against contamination
- Control of zoonoses and zoonotic agents
- Training of staff

The EU hygiene legislation does not apply to the direct supply by the producer of small quantities of primary products (including eggs) to the final consumer, or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer. However, irrespective of this, all eggs must be produced in a hygienic manner and in accordance with Regulation 178/2002 on the General Principles of Food Law.

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The following is considered good practice if you are producing small quantities and the EU hygiene legislation does not apply:

- In order to produce clean eggs, nest boxes should be provided. Litter in the nestbox and on the floor of the building should be kept clean and regularly renewed
- Clean drinking water should be provided with drinkers placed over a drainage area to prevent spoilage of litter.
- Washing of eggs is not allowed. Washing of eggs can damage the invisible natural protective coating on the egg shell which may in-turn increase the risk of penetration of the egg by *Salmonella* bacteria.

The owner or person in charge of poultry shall maintain on a daily basis, in accordance with the diseases of animals legislation, a record of:

- All mortalities that occur in the flock or on the premises
- The daily production of eggs in the flock, and
- The intake of food and water by the flock

Labelling and Marketing Requirements

All egg producers must register their flock with DAFF (see section on registration)

If you sell directly to the final consumer at the production site or by door-to door selling in the region of production, eggs do not need to be graded or stamped.

If you have up to 50 hens and are selling directly at a farmers market:

- You are not required to mark your eggs as long as you provide other information, such as your name and address, at the point of sale, e.g. on a sign beside where the eggs are for sale

If you have more than 50 hens and are selling directly at a farmers market:

- You must apply to DAFF Meat Policy Division, Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 (Ph 01-6072000) for registration as an egg producer. You will receive an application form which must be completed and returned to DAFF. You will then be subject to an inspection which will determine whether you will be registered and receive a producer code
- Eggs must be stamped with the producer code. The code could be applied by means of a hand stamper

If you sell to a shop or restaurant, regardless of the number of hens or quantity of eggs supplied:

- You must apply to DAFF Meat Policy Division, Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 (Ph 01-6072000) for registration as an egg producer. You will receive an application form which must be completed and returned to DAFF. You will then be subject to an inspection which will determine whether you will be registered and receive a producer code
- Your eggs must be graded, marked with the unique producer code, packed in a registered egg packing centre, and be in full compliance with eggs marketing standards regulations and other regulations as detailed following

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All Class A eggs, i.e. those sold through retail and to catering, must be marked with a code identifying the method of production, country of origin and the production establishment.

The code starts with a number to distinguish production method: 0 = Organic, 1 = Free range, 2 = Barn, 3 = Eggs from caged hens.

This is followed by two letters denoting the country of origin, e.g. IE for Ireland, followed by a unique code identifying the county and registered producer, e.g. 2 IE R 989.

Packs containing Class A eggs must have labelled on the outer surface, in easily visible and clearly legible type, the:

- Registered packing centre code
- Quality grading, e.g. 'Class A' or the letter 'A'
- Weight grading (S, M, L, XL)
- Date of minimum durability, i.e. 'best-before' date (must not exceed 28 days from the date of lay)
- Farming method (0,1,2,3)
- Meaning of the producer code shall be explained on or inside the pack
- Advice to consumers to keep eggs chilled after purchase

There is no derogation for producers to sell eggs outside the marketing standards into/through third parties such as retail shops or caterers – all such sales must be from producers and packing centres which are registered with DAFF and eggs must be Class A in all respects.



- 2 = Barn
- IE = Ireland
- R = Roscommon
- 989 = Unique Producer Code
- BB 31/12 = Date of Minimum Durability ('Best-before' Date)

Useful links to legislation and food safety information:

<http://www.fsai.ie>

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie>

There is also separate information on duck eggs available on www.fsai.ie

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