

Guidelines for emu egg farms

Emu egg farms need to meet a range of food safety requirements and obligations to ensure food sold is safe and suitable to eat.

Notification

Farms selling emu eggs for human consumption are required to notify their business details to the NSW Food Authority using the [Form to notify as a wholesaler of emu eggs for human consumption](#) (PDF, 603 KB). Notification is free.

Skills and knowledge

Each food handler and person in control of a food business is required to have food safety skills and knowledge appropriate to their food handling activities.

This means all people undertaking or supervising the collection, sorting and cleaning of eggs need to understand food safety hazards, including sources of contamination, and follow good personal health and hygiene practices. These include:

- wearing clean clothing before working with eggs
 - not handling eggs if they have (or suspect they have) an illness is
 - covering open wounds with a waterproof bandage
 - washing hands (or using hand sanitiser) before handling eggs and whenever hands could contaminate eggs for example, after visiting the toilet and after meal breaks
 - not smoking, spitting, chewing gum, eating, sneezing or coughing near eggs at any time.
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Egg collection

Eggs should be collected at least once per day and more frequently during very hot and cold weather. Eggs are to be discarded if they are:

- cracked
 - broken
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- excessively dirty and cannot be cleaned effectively
- lying in water, mud or mouldy / rotting organic matter
- lying outside a nest.

When collecting eggs:

- Separate clean eggs from dirty eggs.
- Collect eggs in a container that is easy to clean and sanitise. Eggs should be separated to prevent collision and the chance of damage to eggshells.
- Eggs should be held below 15°C with 70% humidity before cleaning.
- Keep egg temperature fairly constant until the eggs are washed to avoid sweating. Sweating occurs when eggs are moved from cold storage to a warm environment, and condensation on the surface of the egg facilitates movement of microbes inside the shell.
- Never cool eggs rapidly before cleaning. The egg shell will contract and may pull any dirt or bacteria on the egg surface into the pores when cooled.
- Industry guidance recommends packaging within 96 hours (4 days) of lay.

Cleaning eggs

Dirty eggs must not be sold for human consumption. Dirty eggs must be cleaned so that visible faeces, soil or other matter is removed from the shell.

Eggs with visible faeces, soil or other matter that cannot be removed by dry cleaning should be segregated and disposed of hygienically, away from clean intact eggs.

Cleaning dirty eggs

To clean dirty eggs, use a material that is dry, clean and not reused - disposable paper towels are recommended. The material must be suitable for contact with food.

A slightly dirty egg can be brushed with an egg brush or rubbed with a clean sanding sponge, loofah, paper towel or plastic scourer (if stained) with a gentle rubbing motion.

If a dry cloth is used, an adequate supply should be available so that only clean cloth is passed over the egg each time. Make sure the cloth is changed if there is any sign of soiling.

Dirty cloths must be washed, sanitised and dried before reuse.

If dirty eggs are cleaned with damp cloth, certain precautions must be taken:

- The water used to dampen the cloth should be sanitised and frequently changed.
- Detergents and sanitisers used must be suitable for contact with food and used according to the manufacturer's specifications.
- Rinse the cloth in drinking-quality water and wring to ensure it is not dripping before use.

- When the cloth passes over the egg, it should not leave water droplets on the surface. Only a thin layer of moisture that can readily evaporate should be visible on the egg surface.
- Keep an adequate supply of damp cloths and change frequently with any visible sign of soiling.
- Dirty cloths should be washed, sanitised and dried if they are to be reused for cleaning.

Any brushes, cloths, loofas, or other materials used in cleaning should be sanitised in 100 ppm of chlorine for 20 minutes after use. Materials used for cleaning eggs should be food grade and must not be used for any other purpose. Sanding blocks should not be used as they are not made to be used with food and loose grit could be left on the egg.

For more information, see the factsheet [Egg cleaning procedures](#) (PDF, 418 KB).

Traceability

The business must maintain a system to trace who eggs were sold to. This helps food safety authorities trace eggs back to the farm from their point of sale and provides a safeguard in the event of a food poisoning incident or disease outbreak. The business must maintain written records of all shell eggs distributed for 12 months.

Egg stamping

Eggs must not be sold or supplied for human consumption unless each individual egg is marked with a unique identifier, collection date and best before date. The last 4 digits of the emu farm's corresponding National Parks & Wildlife Service licence number should be used as the unique identifier to assist with traceability.

Sales and distribution

Whole unprocessed emu eggs must not be sold to customers as whole eggs to take away and cook at home.

Emu eggs are only to be sold to retail food businesses such as cafés, restaurants, takeaways and caterers.

Emu eggs are not to be sold to a distributor or other intermediary for on sale to consumers or other retail food businesses.

Labelling

Eggs sold to caterers, including restaurants, must include information such as shelf life, lot identification, and relevant warning and advisory statements.

Storage and handling instructions

Storage and handling instructions must be provided with each batch of emu eggs sold. Recommended storage instructions are to keep eggs at refrigeration temperatures of below 5°C,

with a 'best before' date no longer than 6 weeks (42 days) from the day of pack. Industry guidance recommends storing eggs below 15°C and packaging within 96 hours (4 days) of lay.

Handling instructions must include the requirement that eggs are to be thoroughly cooked prior to serving for consumption.

Storage and transport

To prevent damage during transport, eggs should be packed in material suitable for contact with food. Best practice is to store and transport eggs below 15°C (+/- 3°C), avoiding excess temperature fluctuations.

More information

- Visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
 - Contact the Food Authority helpline:
 - Phone 1300 552 406 (8:30am to 5:30pm, NSW business days)
 - Email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au
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