

Help for new businesses

If you're thinking of creating a new food product, we can provide general guidelines on equipment, sanitation and processing techniques. When you're ready to start processing, we'll inspect your facilities. If your processing plant or home kitchen meets state requirements, you'll receive a license to sell or process food in Oregon.

We'll also check your food labels to make sure they meet federal and state labeling standards.

Eggs: making the grade

To make sure you as a consumer get what you pay for when you buy eggs, our food safety specialists monitor the quality of eggs in food warehouses and grocery stores. We look for defects in egg shells and yolks, check for freshness, and make sure eggs are correctly sized. About three percent of the eggs we check are rejected for defects or improper sizing.

To make sure commercial egg products sold to bakeries, restaurants and food processors are properly pasteurized, we monitor egg-processing practices at Oregon's commercial egg-breaking plant in Canby.

“We are continually working to make sure we have the best food safety program in the nation.”

Ron McKay
Administrator
Food Safety Division

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Making sure Oregon consumers receive safe, properly labeled food



Food Safety

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Foodborne illness widespread, costly

Foodborne illness is more common than you think. If you experience nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea or stomach cramps, and your symptoms last a day or less, you may be the victim of a foodborne illness.

Such illnesses usually stem from improper cooking or inadequate refrigeration of food, or mishandling by food workers. It's estimated that contaminated food causes more than 12 million illnesses a year and costs billions in medical expenses and lost job time.

Our role: consumer protection

Our main mission in the Food Safety Division is preventing the spread of foodborne illness. We accomplish this by monitoring Oregon's food industry and enforcing state sanitation laws.

We also work to make sure that you, the consumer, get what you pay for. We see to it that food is not contaminated, mislabeled, misrepresented, or changed in any way that would impair safety, wholesomeness or purity.

Monitoring Oregon's food

To keep Oregon's food supply safe, we inspect and license all food outlets in Oregon except restaurants. These 10,000 outlets include:

- bakeries
- dairy farms and dairy processors
- food & beverage processors
- grocery stores & meat markets
- delicatessens
- food storage warehouses
- home kitchens
- shellfish & seafood

Food safety specialists visit these establishments at least once a year, checking to see that food handling, storage and processing practices meet state requirements. They also make sure processing equipment is clean and in proper working order.



Looking for bugs

Our staff of 33 food safety specialists routinely take food samples which are later tested for bacteria and other substances. Last year, microbiologists and chemists in our Laboratory Services Division performed more than 74,000 tests on over 12,500 food samples, looking for bacteria such as salmonella and listeria that can cause serious illness.

Laboratory staff also check food for:

- fat content
- illegal preservatives
- yeasts and molds
- foreign material such as hair, sticks and dirt
- pesticide residues
- standards of identity

Pesticide residues low

Last year, tests of more than 500 food samples showed that:

- 85% contained no detectable pesticide residues
- 14% tested positive but were well within federal tolerance standards
- less than 1% of the food samples actually violated federal standards



Enforcing food laws

Most food establishments meet or exceed Oregon sanitation requirements, and laboratory testing reveals few problems with Oregon's food supply. However, when we discover contaminated food or insanitary conditions that could lead to contamination, we have a variety of enforcement options. They include:

- shutting down food outlets until violations are corrected.
- seizing contaminated food to keep it out of consumer channels
- condemning dirty or malfunctioning food-processing equipment

In general, we work closely with food processors and plant managers to help prevent food safety problems before they occur.