

Cleaning and Disinfection on the Farm

FARM FRESH EGGS



Collecting fresh eggs on the farm is a fun activity. Whether using them for food in your home, or selling them for some additional income, proper handling is needed to prevent foodborne illness. Follow these tips when handling farm fresh eggs.

WHY SHOULD EGGS BE CLEANED?

Eggs that are not properly cleaned and sanitized before being used can cause human illness. This is particularly true when egg shells have visible debris on them such as feces.

Disease-causing bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, on dirty eggshells can enter the cooked product, as well as contaminate hands, food, or kitchen equipment during the cooking process. However, even eggs shells that appear to be clean can carry disease-causing germs, as the bacteria can enter the egg through pores in the eggs' shells, and contaminate the edible part of the egg.

The best prevention is to reduce the number of dirty eggs. However, since even shells that appear clean may carry germs, all eggs should be properly cleaned and sanitized.



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REDUCE CONTAMINATION IN POULTRY AREAS

Harmful bacteria can enter eggs through pores in the shell when laid in dirty/contaminated nests or floors. Reducing fecal contamination of eggs can reduce this risk.



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- Gather eggs frequently (e.g., daily, or more frequently, when possible). This reduces opportunities for contamination with feces.
- Discard any broken or cracked eggs.
- Remove feces often (at least weekly) from poultry houses or areas to prevent transfer to nesting boxes.
- Replace bedding in nest boxes routinely (at least weekly).

WASH THE EGGS

- Wash and rinse eggs in warm to hot water.
 - Water temperature in the 90-120°F range is best; hot tap water is generally 120°F.
 - The temperature should be at least 20 degrees warmer than the egg. If “freshly laid” eggs are gathered, use temperatures at the warmer end of the range. Eggs are typically 105°F when laid.
 - Warm to hot water causes the egg contents to expand which helps prevent bacteria from being pulled in through the pores.
 - Colder temperatures will cause egg contents to contract and pull in any bacteria on the shell surface.
- Wash off any visible contamination. Wash eggs individually. Do not soak eggs in the water.
- Unscented soap or detergent can aid this process. Fragrance soaps should be avoided. Eggs can absorb the fragrance and develop an off flavor.
- Avoid cleaning eggs in the kitchen sink. This will help to prevent contamination of kitchen surfaces. If this is not possible, disinfect all surfaces and the sink after cleaning the eggs.



Photo from Renée Dewell, Iowa State University

SANITIZE THE EGGS

- After washing (and rinsing) eggs, it is important to sanitize them.
- To do this, make a sanitizing solution using 1 tablespoon bleach:1 gallon of water.
- First dip the eggs completely into the solution, then remove them from the solution and rinse them off.
- Last, dry the eggs with a clean towel and promptly store in a refrigerator set at 35-40°F.

WASH HANDS AFTER HANDLING EGGS

Poultry feces can harbor several disease-causing organisms such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. Handling eggs can contaminate hands, and lead to possible ingestion of these organisms. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after handling fresh eggs, poultry, or after cleaning nesting boxes or poultry areas.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Egg Cleaning Procedures for the Backyard Flock](#). University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

[Home-Produced Chicken Eggs](#). Colorado State University Extension

Additional information on cleaning and disinfection and farm biosecurity can be found on the CFSPH website.

- [Cleaning and Disinfection Resources](#)
- [Farm Biosecurity Resources](#)

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