

INSPECTING FOOD ITEMS

Objective: *After completing this week's lesson your employees should be able to determine when to accept or reject different types of food during receiving.*

As you begin the final week of National Food Safety Education Month, tell your employees that everything they have learned about purchasing and receiving in the previous four weeks now comes together in this lesson.

As an introduction to this lesson, point out to employees that:

- Food delivered to the establishment should be inspected carefully.
- Internal temperatures should be checked and recorded.
- Other conditions should be checked, such as color, texture, and odor.
- Employees should use their senses—touch, smell, sight, and (in some cases) taste—to determine if a food item should be accepted or rejected.

Next, discuss the specific criteria for accepting or rejecting the various food items listed below. Be sure to include criteria specific to your own establishment. To make things more interesting tell a few stories about receiving “mishaps” your establishment has experienced. Encourage employees to share similar stories from previous work experience.

Fresh Meat:

Tell employees that fresh meat must be received at an internal temperature of 41°F (5°C) or lower and must display a USDA Inspection stamp. A USDA grading stamp on the product indicates the level of quality and is not mandatory.

ACCEPT

- BEEF COLOR: bright, cherry red
- LAMB COLOR: light red
- PORK COLOR: pink lean meat, white fat
- TEXTURE: firm and springs back when touched

REJECT

- COLOR: brown or greenish; brown, green, or purple blotches; white or green spots
- TEXTURE: slimy, sticky, or dry
- PACKAGING: broken cartons, dirty wrappers, or torn packaging
- ODOR: sour odor

Fresh Poultry:

Tell employees that fresh poultry must be received at an internal temperature of 41°F (5°C) or lower and must display a USDA Inspection stamp. A USDA grading stamp on the product indicates the level of quality and is not mandatory.

ACCEPT

- COLOR: no discoloration
- TEXTURE: firm and springs back when touched
- ODOR: none
- PACKAGING: should be surrounded by crushed, self-draining ice

REJECT

- COLOR: purple or green discoloration around the neck; dark wing tips (red is acceptable)
- TEXTURE: stickiness under the wings or around joints
- ODOR: abnormal, unpleasant odor

W
E
E
K

F
I
V
E

Tell employees fresh fish must be received at an internal temperature of 41°F (5°C) or lower and should be packaged in crushed or flaked self-draining ice.

ACCEPT

- COLOR: bright red gills; bright shiny skin
- ODOR: mild ocean or seaweed smell
- EYES: bright, clear, and full
- TEXTURE: firm flesh that springs back when touched

REJECT

- COLOR: dull, gray gills; dry skin
- ODOR: strong fishy or ammonia smell
- EYES: cloudy, red-rimmed, sunken
- TEXTURE: soft, leaves an imprint when touched

Fresh Shellfish and Crustacea:

Tell employees fresh shellfish (clams, mussels, oysters) and crustacea (lobster, shrimp, crabs) must be received at 45°F (7°C) or lower. Shellfish must be purchased from certified shellfish suppliers. It must be received with shellstock identification tags, which must remain on the container and then be kept on file for 90 days from the date the last shellfish was used.

ACCEPT

- ODOR: mild ocean or seaweed smell
- SHELLS: closed and unbroken (shellfish); hard and heavy shells (lobsters and crabs)
- CONDITION: if fresh, they are received alive; packed with seaweed and kept moist (crustacea)

REJECT

- ODOR: strong fishy smell
- SHELLS: open shells that do not close when tapped; broken shells (shellfish); soft shells (crustacea)
- CONDITION: dead on arrival; tail fails to curl when picked up (lobsters)
- TEXTURE: slimy, sticky, or dry (shellfish)

Fresh Eggs (shell):

Tell employees that fresh eggs must be purchased from government-inspected suppliers and display a mandatory inspection stamp. All shell-egg cartons for direct sale to consumers are required to carry safe-handling instructions. Also tell them that:

- Eggs may display a voluntary grading stamp, which indicates they have been graded for quality under federal and/or state supervision.
- Eggs must be received at an air temperature of 45°F (7°C) or lower and be delivered in trucks capable of documenting air temperature during transportation.
- Fresh eggs should be delivered within a few days of the packing date.
- Liquid, frozen and dehydrated eggs and egg products must be pasteurized and display a USDA inspection mark.

ACCEPT

- ODOR: none
- SHELLS: clean and unbroken
- CONDITION: firm, high yolks that are not easy to break and whites that cling to yolks

REJECT

- ODOR: sulfur smell or off odor
- SHELLS: dirty or cracked

Fresh Dairy (milk, butter, cheese):

Tell employees that fresh dairy must be received at 41°F (5°C) or lower unless otherwise specified by the law in your jurisdiction. Milk and milk products should be labeled Grade A, which means they meet FDA standards for quality and processing. Dairy products with a Grade A label, are made with pasteurized milk. Only pasteurized dairy products should be purchased.

ACCEPT

- MILK: sweetish flavor
- BUTTER: sweet flavor, uniform color, firm texture
- CHEESE: typical flavor and texture and uniform color

REJECT

- MILK: sour, bitter, or moldy taste
- BUTTER: sour, bitter, or moldy taste; uneven color; soft texture
- CHEESE: unnatural mold, uneven color, abnormal flavor or texture

Canned Goods:

Tell employees that canned food must be checked carefully for damage. Spot-check the contents of canned goods and discard items that are foamy or milky (*never* taste them). The can and its seal must be in good condition. Reject cans if you find the following:

- Swollen ends
- Leaks and flawed seals
- Rust
- Dents
- Missing labels

Dry Goods:

Tell employees that dry food should be received at room temperature and its packaging should be intact and in good condition. Reject the product if the packaging is damp, has moisture stains, or is torn, or punctured. The product should also be rejected if it:

- Contains insects, insect eggs, or rodent droppings
- Has an abnormal color or odor
- Contains spots of mold
- Has a slimy appearance

End the lesson by answering any questions that employees may have about accepting and rejecting deliveries in your establishment. Next, distribute the activity sheet found on the next page. Be sure to remind employees that even though this is the last week of National Food Safety Education month, food safety should be a priority every day!

Accept or Reject?

Directions: For each of the following receiving situations, circle *ACCEPT* for the items you would accept and *REJECT* for the items you would reject.

- | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Steaks that are bright, cherry red | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 2. Whole chicken with dark wing tips | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 3. Fish that has a mild ocean or seaweed smell | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 4. Eggs with whites that cling to the yolk | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 5. Lobsters with tails that fail to curl when the lobsters are picked up | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 6. A shipment of clams with shells that remain open when tapped | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 7. A case of peaches with large dents in the cans | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 8. A damp case of rice | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 9. Fresh pork chops received at an internal temperature of 50° F (10° C) | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 10. Frozen turkeys received without a USDA grading stamp | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 11. Fresh shellfish received at 45° F (7° C) | ACCEPT | REJECT |
| 12. Milk with a sweet flavor | ACCEPT | REJECT |