



NEW ENGLAND EXTENSION FOOD SAFETY CONSORTIUM

GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

In the Barn/Packing House
Sanitation During Storage

New England GAP Guidelines Addressed Here: *Sanitation During Storage in the Barn/Packing House*

- Storage areas are clean and free of contamination.
- Storage area are used exclusively for food crops and their containers.
- Produce is stored at least six inches off the floor, depending on the nature of the crop.

Sanitation practices during storage can play a critical role in keeping fresh produce free from microbial contamination. If the storage area and containers have not been cleaned and sanitized properly or if an animals, insects or birds can gain access to the contents of the storage container or if worker hygiene is not enforced then produce can become contaminated with harmful microorganisms. All animals including humans, birds, reptiles and insects can carry harmful organisms and transport them to fresh produce. Airborne contaminants from nearby livestock or poultry areas or manure storage and treatment areas can also contaminate the produce while in storage. Damaged container surfaces will not only damage produce but can also harbor harmful microorganisms therefore should not be used.

Poor sanitation practices during storage will increase the risk of a foodborne illness outbreak. As growers it is up to you to establish and monitor good sanitation practices and lower the risk of microbial contamination of your fresh produce.

Take a walk around your facility and check for these signs of potential food safety hazards:

- Dirty storage area and/or dirty storage containers
- Damaged containers
- Dripping pipes or equipment
- Broken doors and windows
- Torn screens
- Storage containers without covers
- Produce stored on the floor or less than 6" off the floor
- Rodent or bird droppings in the storage area
- Insect infestations
- Poor worker hygiene practices

What can you do?

- Clean storage areas on a regularly scheduled basis or as needed.
 - All visible debris, soil, dirt and unnecessary items should be removed.
 - Set up a cleaning and maintenance schedule with workers.
 - Assign tasks and monitor tasks.
 - Take steps to minimize airborne contaminants.
- Clean and sanitize your produce storage containers before use.
 - Take care not to expose clean and sanitized storage containers to soil, manure or pests.
 - Inspect containers for damage on a regular basis.
- Store unused containers where they are protected from contamination by pests, dirt or condensation dripping from overhead fixtures or equipment.
- Keep the storage area and the grounds around your storage free from items that attract rodents, birds, and insects.
 - Waste, litter, garbage and old, unused equipment should be removed.
 - Keep grass trimmed and make sure there is no pooling of rain water.
- Inspect the storage area regularly for signs of insect, rodent or bird infestations.
 - Eliminate any potential nesting or hiding places.
 - Block any holes in the walls, doors, vents and floors to prevent critters from entering the area.
 - Use screens on windows and doors.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that have been soiled by wildlife.
- Cover produce containers and store on shelves that are at least 6” off the floor.
- Train workers to keep storage areas clean.

Additional References and Resources:

Guide to Minimize Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodguid.html>

US Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), October, 1998

Food Safety Initiative Staff, HFS-32

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

200 C Street S.W. Washington, D. C. 20204

Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower's Guide: Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work; Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1940, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Directors, New England Cooperative Extension Systems, Universities of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

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