



NEW ENGLAND EXTENSION FOOD SAFETY CONSORTIUM

GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

"Pick Your Own" Operations Sanitation

New England GAP Guidelines Addressed Here:

Sanitation in "Pick Your Own" Operations:

- Pets are not allowed in “pick your own” areas.
- Toilet facilities and hand washing stations are clean and regularly serviced and available for customers.
- Clean containers are available for customer purchase and use.
- Produce that is picked by customers cannot be sold at retail.
- Facilities are available for customers who have come in contact with animals to wash their hands before entering the “pick your own” area.

In New England, “pick your own” produce farms are very popular. Customers enjoy harvesting fruits and vegetables in the fields or orchards often accompanied by children and pets. In some cases “pick your own” operations offer their customers other attractions such as petting zoos.

Pets, like all animals, can harbor harmful microorganisms that can cause foodborne illness. Humans can be the source of foodborne disease causing bacteria and viruses and can contaminate the fresh fruits and vegetables they handle when harvesting their favorites at a "pick your own" farm. *E.coli 0157.H7*, *Salmonella spp.*, *Shigella spp.*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Giardia lamblia*, *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *hepatitis A* can often be traced back to human or animal sources.

It is important to communicate to the "pick your own" customer that you make food safety a priority. Think about how you would like your customers to handle the produce in your field or orchard. Provide printed guidelines that describe safe food handling practices. Post signs that remind customers to wash their hands.

Do these food safety hazards exist in your "pick your own" fields and orchards?

- Household pets in the fields and orchards
- Children in the fields and orchards when not being supervised by adults
- No bathroom or hand washing facilities for customers and their children
- Bathroom and hand washing facilities poorly serviced (no paper towels, soap, toilet paper or water?).
- Dirty “pick your own” containers
- Produce that has been harvested by customers offered for sale
- Petting zoo without hand washing facilities

What can you do?

- If possible, do not allow pets in the field or orchard. If pets must accompany customers, encourage them to pick up and properly dispose of any pet waste.
- Establish guidelines for customers with children in the field and orchard. Discourage diaper changing in the field.
- Provide trash cans for any customer trash.
- Provide toilet facilities and handwashing facilities that are accessible, clean, and regularly supplied with toilet paper, paper towels, soap, water, and trash can. If portable toilets are used, they must be maintained to prevent wastewater from contaminating the fields.
- Encourage customers to wash their hands after petting animals and using toilet facilities.
- Use signs and fact sheets to promote handwashing and safe food handling.
- Clean and sanitize the pick your own containers that you provide to customers.
- Do not sell produce that has been picked by customers.

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

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

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

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