

March 31, 2011

Safe Handling Labels, Shell Eggs

The following Q/A's will help explain the safe handling requirements for shell eggs. These address sale at retail stores but also apply to eggs sold at farmers' markets.

Allow some leeway at farmers' markets, meet the intent, if not the letter of the law. For instance, requiring a hairline box around the statement, in my opinion, is not necessary for farmers' markets, whereas it is a requirement in a retail store.

Question: What safe handling statement must be included in the label of shell eggs that have not been treated specifically to kill all live *Salmonella* before the shell eggs may be distributed to the consumer?

Answer: The safe handling statement is: "**SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS:** To prevent illness from bacteria: keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly."

Question: How must the safe handling statement appear on the label?

Answer: The statement must appear on the label prominently, conspicuously, and in a type size no smaller than one-sixteenth of one inch. The statement must appear in a hairline box and the words "safe handling instructions" must appear in bold capital letters. For example:

SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS: To prevent illness from bacteria: keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.

Question: For shell eggs that are sold to consumers, where must the safe handling statement appear on the label?

Answer: The statement must appear on either: (1) the principal display panel (PDP) (i.e., that part of the label most likely to be seen by the consumer at the time of purchase); or (2) the information panel (i.e., the panel immediately to the right of the PDP or, in the instance where the top of the package is the PDP, any panel adjacent to the PDP).