

Egg Grades

AA Grade Egg

A Grade AA egg will stand up tall. The yolk is firm and the area covered by the white is small. There is a large proportion of thick white to thin white.



Grade AA

A Grade Egg

A Grade A egg covers a relatively small area. The yolk is round and upstanding. The thick white is large in proportion to the thin white and stands fairly well around the yolk.



Grade A

B Grade Egg

A Grade B egg spreads out more. The yolk is flattened and there is about as much (or more) thin white as thick white.



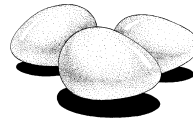
Grade B

Q: What is the Grade of an egg?

A: Grades are determined by the quality of the egg. Grades are **AA**, **A**, and **B**, with **AA** being the highest quality. For example, an **AA** egg's shell is clean, unbroken and practically normal, the air cell does not exceed 1/8 inch in depth, the white is clear and firm, and the yolk is free from apparent defects. There is no difference in nutritive value between the different grades.

Q: What are egg sizes?

A: Sizes are determined by the weight of a dozen eggs. **Jumbo** eggs weigh 30 oz. per dozen, **Extra Large** eggs weigh 27 oz. per dozen, **Large** eggs weigh 24 oz. per dozen, **Medium** eggs weigh 21 oz. per dozen and **Small** eggs weigh 18 oz. per dozen.



Division Mission

The Division of Inspection & Consumer Services (ICS) is committed to promoting an honest, equitable marketplace and to encouraging integrity in Agriculture and Industry.

For More Information:

Colo. Dept. of Agriculture / Egg Program
2331 W 31st. Ave
Denver, CO 80211
Phone: (303) 867-9221
Fax: (303) 480-9236
E-mail: eggs@ag.state.co.us

Rev. 1/11



The Colorado Egg Law and You : Questions and Answers About Egg Quality & Safety



Division of Inspection & Consumer Services

www.colorado.gov/ag/ics

When you buy eggs in Colorado, the law requires that the product be handled properly from the time it is packed, until it reaches the store shelf. The size, grade, pack date and producer identification must be on the carton. These guidelines help ensure that the consumer gets a safe, quality product.

Q: How is the Egg Law enforced?

A: Wholesalers and retailers of eggs must license with our office. Inspectors throughout the state perform egg inspections at businesses that wholesale eggs, as well as grocery and convenience stores. Eggs that do not meet the grade requirements, that are improperly stored, or are not properly labeled are removed from sale.

Where are eggs checked for quality and safe handling?

A: *At the plant.* Before being sold in Colorado, eggs must be graded (checked for quality). Generally, the egg producer does this at their plant. In addition, some companies voluntarily participate in an on-site USDA egg inspection program.

B: *At the wholesaler and retailer.* Since eggs are perishable, the proper distribution and storage of eggs is vital to ensure that you get the quality eggs you are purchasing. The Colorado Department of Agriculture inspects eggs at both the wholesale and retail level.

C: *Small Egg Producers* can voluntarily apply for an Egg Dealer license and request an on-farm inspection. A license is required to sell eggs to a retail store or restaurant.

Q: How are eggs inspected?

A: Department of Agriculture inspectors determine the quality of eggs by candling them. Long ago, candling was done by holding the egg in front of a candle in a dark room. Now, special lights are used.

Q: What do you look for when you inspect eggs?

A: The shell must be clean, without prominent stains. The egg must be egg-shaped! The yolk and white are inspected by **candling**. The quality of the egg is determined by measuring the size of the air cell (an air space inside every egg that increases in size over time) and by evaluating the viscosity of the white and the prominence of the yolk. Defects such as blood spots and cracked shells (checks) can also be detected by candling.



Q: Do eggs have to be refrigerated?

A: In Colorado, all shell eggs must be continually refrigerated from the time they are packed, until they are offered for sale. Eggs should be refrigerated at a maximum temperature of 41° F. Refrigeration helps keep the egg from deteriorating in quality, and retards bacteria growth.

Q: How long are eggs good for after they are packed?

A: Eggs can be sold up to 45 days past the pack date. Eggs that are properly refrigerated will maintain their quality for several weeks. If eggs are repacked, they must be labeled with their original pack date.

Q: What about salmonella?

A: With proper care and handling, eggs pose no greater risk than any other perishable food. Only a small number of eggs (approximately one in 10,000) might contain Salmonella. If an egg does contain the bacteria, the bacterial growth will be minimized if the eggs are properly refrigerated. Thorough cooking will destroy the bacteria. Remember, proper refrigeration and thorough cooking are essential!

Q: What's a "cage free" egg?

A: The hens used to produce cage-free eggs are not kept in individual cages – they can run about the floor or yard of the producer.

Q: What's an "organic" egg?

A: Eggs from hens fed rations having ingredients that were grown without pesticides, herbicides or that contain hormones.

Q: What's the difference between brown and white eggs?

A: Brown eggs are laid by a different breed of hen than white eggs. Generally, brown eggs are laid by brown or red colored hens. There's no difference in nutritional value, quality or taste.