What to Expect of a Produce Inspection
A Guide for Washington Farms

The Produce Safety Program is responsible for the education and enforcement of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. Our farm inspection program is focused on promoting food safety and preventing foodborne illnesses linked to fresh produce.

Routine inspections began in spring of 2019. All initial inspections are educational unless an egregious condition, where a visible source and route of contamination, is observed. Such conditions must be considered serious and likely to pose an imminent public health risk.

The program is federally funded, so inspected farms will not be charged a fee. Enforcement protocols for non-compliance are still under development.

Initial Contact

A WSDA regional inspector will contact your farm to help determine whether a produce inspection is required or if you qualify for an exemption. Exempt and qualified exempt farms will not be subject to a full, routine produce inspection. Contact us at producesafety@agr.wa.gov if you have questions about your compliance status.

Covered farms that are subject to an inspection will undergo a routine inspection during growing, harvesting, packing and/or holding times. Your inspection date will also depend on your crops and region, food safety knowledge, compliance history, size, and overall preparedness.

Tip: One person from every covered farm must successfully complete the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training or equivalent training recognized by the FDA.

Routine Produce Inspection

On your pre-scheduled inspection day, WSDA inspectors will ask to speak to the owner or person in charge, introduce themselves and explain the reason for the visit. They will also issue a written Notice of Inspection that cites our regulatory authority and indicates your inspection consent.

Inspection Support

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Common Compliance Issues

- Lack of annual employee training
- Missing or incomplete records
- Animals in the field or packing area
- Lack of pre-harvest monitoring to identify contaminated produce
- Portable toilet not accessible for cleaning and located too close to produce
- Insufficient cleaning and sanitizing of food contact surfaces

Recordkeeping Tips

- Records required for most covered farms:
  - Employee Training
  - Cleaning and Sanitizing
  - Biological Soil Amendment Treatment
  - Water Quality Testing (effective starting in 2022–2024 depending on the farm size)
- Electronic and handwritten records (using permanent ink) are acceptable.
- Records must be accurate and legible.
- You can use existing records from other audits or inspections.
- Most general records (except sales and water related records) must be kept for two years.
- Records must include (as applicable):
  - Farm name and location
  - Actual values or observations obtained
  - Description of produce
  - Location of growing area
  - Activity date and time
- Records must be signed and initialed by person performing the activity.
- Some records must be reviewed, signed and dated by a supervisor or responsible party.

Visit agr.wa.gov/producesafety for inspection documents and recordkeeping resources.