



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. This new farm inspection program is focused on promoting food safety and preventing foodborne illnesses linked to fresh produce.

Routine inspections will begin in spring 2019. All initial inspections will be 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 farms that must be inspected will not be charged a fee. Enforcement protocols for non-compliance are still under development.

Initial Contact

A WSDA regional inspector may contact your farm to help determine whether a produce inspection is required.

Questions to Anticipate:

- Do you grow, harvest, pack or hold produce?
- What is the average size of your farm?
- Where do you sell the majority of your produce?
- Is your produce grown for commercial processing?
- Do you sell any other food products?

If exemptions apply, the inspector may request records to support your exemption status. In some cases, this may involve a scheduled farm visit to verify your records in-person. However, exempt and qualified exempt farms will **not** be subject a full, routine produce inspection.

If no exemptions apply, the inspector will conduct a pre-inspection call to further explain inspection expectations and prepare you for their visit. All inspections must occur during growing, harvesting or packing times. Your inspection date will also depend on your crops and region, food safety knowledge, compliance history, size and overall preparedness.

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.

Meet our inspectors



Kelly Hamilton
Yakima



Jerrid Higgins
Wenatchee



Beth Lorence
Bellingham

Initial Interview

The inspector will briefly describe the scope of the inspection and what to expect. The time an inspection takes depends on the type of inspection, farm activities, farm size, and observations during the inspection. The inspector will ask what activities, such as planting, harvesting and packing are occurring that day.

The Walk-Through

The inspector will need to observe farm operations, but may also ask about farming practices or operations they cannot observe during the inspection. They will take notes, review farm documents such as training and sanitation records and may take pictures. Throughout the inspection, the inspector will explain what is being observed and why.

Exit Interview

The inspector will review any observations and regulatory findings. The inspector will also identify preventive produce safety practices and conditions on your farm that align with the regulation.

If you are able to make corrections to identified violations during the inspection, these will be documented. If the violation cannot be corrected during the inspection, the inspector will work with you to determine a reasonable time frame for corrective actions and future preventive measures.

Finally, the inspector will answer any questions you have and provide an observation form to document the inspection.

For questions regarding produce inspections, contact Kelly Hamilton at khamilton@agr.wa.gov or (509) 570 - 4656.

Tip: A farm map can help expedite the inspection.

Tip: Your person in charge of produce safety should be available to answer questions.

Will there be unannounced inspections?

Routine inspections will be announced and scheduled, but unannounced inspections **may** occur if:

- 1) Your farm is unresponsive or unwilling to set an inspection date.
- 2) Your farm has had produce safety issues in the past that have not been corrected.
- 3) A follow-up inspection is needed and an unannounced inspection may work best to observe that necessary changes have been made.
- 4) Your farm is linked to a complaint, recall, or foodborne outbreak investigation.

This publication was made possible by Grant Number U18FD005913 from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration funding program PAR-16-137. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the FDA.

Do you need this publication in an alternate format? Contact WSDA at (360) 902-1976 or TTY Relay (800) 833-6388