



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

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Food Safety Precautions for Handling Food-Producing Animals

In 2011, Denver City Council approved an ordinance which expands residents' rights to raise food-producing animals on residential property. The ordinance allows for up to 8 chickens or ducks (no roosters or drakes) for eggs and two dwarf goats (no unneutered males) for milk. Additionally, residents can have unlimited offspring of these animals that are under 6 months.

There are many benefits to having food-producing animals, including inexpensive access to healthy foods and increased activity/exercise for family members involved in maintaining food producing animals. However it is important to be aware that there are certain safety concerns as well. Whether animals are raised on an industrial farm, in the wild, or in your own backyard, harmful bacteria can grow in their intestinal tracts. Bacteria which can cause serious illnesses like Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. coli, and Listeria, are sometimes found in the foods produced by animals. Fortunately with a little foresight and diligence, many of these risks can be minimized by taking precautions in the yard and in the kitchen. People in certain high-risk populations should not consume unpasteurized dairy products due to greater health risks (see inset below).

Safety in the Yard

- Keep food-producing animals in a clean and ventilated pen, coop, or fenced enclosure with plenty of space, shelter, and fresh water. Keep animals out of other parts of your yard to prevent the tracking of feed and fecal material around your property.
- Keep companion animals out of the living and free ranging space of your food-producing animals. Dogs and cats can track organic debris and fecal material into your home on their feet and fur.
- Maintain living quarters of food-producing animals so that they are free of accumulated feces, soiled bedding material, old feed, etc. Maintaining your animals' living area will promote healthy animals with high quality food yields.
- Isolate ill animals so that they do not spread illness to other animals.
- If composting animal waste, allow it to cure for at least 45 to 60 days or ensure it reaches 130-150°F before use in gardens and greenhouses.
- Always wash hands thoroughly using warm soapy water after handling animals, their feed and waste, and associated equipment. Do not touch your mouth or face until after you've thoroughly washed your hands.
- Upon entering your home, remove shoes or clothes that have been soiled by food-producing animals so that you do not track their germs around your home.
- Supervise children involved with the care of food producing animals to ensure that they use good hand washing and hygienic practices.

Safety in the Kitchen

- Do not wash fresh eggs. This strips them of their natural protective coating which blocks the entry of bacteria through tiny pores in the egg's shell.

Instead, use a dry or dampened cloth to gently remove any dirt or debris on the egg.

- Do not allow live poultry or other non-companion animals in the house.
- To prevent spread of contamination from raw animal products to other foods, do not intermingle animal products with other foods.
- Wash hands, countertops, and other kitchen equipment before and after handling raw animal products. Follow up by wiping these surfaces with a sanitizing solution. You can buy premixed sanitizing solution in the home cleaning section of the grocery store, or you can make your own by mixing one teaspoon of bleach with a gallon of tepid water. Make a new solution up every day that you use it.
- Supervise the hand washing practices of small children to ensure that hands are thoroughly washed with warm soapy water before and after handling any raw products from food-producing animals.
- After harvesting eggs or milk, quickly cool them off to refrigerated temperatures and store them cold until use.
- Fully cook eggs to at least 145°F and verify the cooking temperature using a food thermometer.

Protecting People at High Risk

Due to the potential for the presence of Listeria bacteria in raw (unpasteurized) milk, individuals who are in certain high risk populations—like very small children, the elderly, immunocompromised individuals, and pregnant women—should not consume raw milk products. Consuming foods with Listeria bacteria can cause listeriosis, a very serious illness that can result in death. Cooking does destroy the bacteria, so it's safe to use the milk products from food-producing animals in cooked foods for high risk individuals. For any food safety questions associated with food-producing animals, please contact the Public Health Inspection Division at phicommments@denvergov.org or call 311.

