

Page N. Inspection of Natural Cheese Cutting and Shredding Operations. (Form DA - 151 - 11)

Storage & Tempering of Bulk Cheese

Item N1—Room Construction (58.126, 58.412).

See the guidelines for Item B50—Room Construction - Tempering.

Item N2—Lighting & Ventilation (58.126d, e, 58.412).

See the guidelines for Item B54—Lighting & Ventilation.

Item N3—Storage Temperature (58.126d, e, 58.412).

See the guidelines for Item B55—Temperature Control.

Bulk cheese coolers should be maintained at a temperature of 45° F or less (do not criticize higher temperatures in tempering rooms). If the cooler is at a higher temperature recommend the temperature be kept below 45° F, also show the current temperature on the survey report.

Item N4—Pallets & Floor Racks (58.126e).

See the guidelines for Item K4—Pallets & Floor Racks.

Item N5—Housekeeping (58.126e, 58.127f, 58.146d).

See the guidelines for Item K5—Housekeeping.

Cheese Dumping & Stripping

Item N7—Room Construction (58.126, 58.413).

See the guidelines for Item A1—Room Construction.

When consumer-sized packages of cheese are cut and wrapped or shredded, separate rooms shall be provided for the dumping and stripping of the bulk cheese and for the cutting and wrapping operation. Separate rooms are required because of the unsanitary nature of dumping the cheese. Also, recommend that the cardboard boxes and the plastic liners be removed by separate employees (see guidelines for Item K17—Cheese Dumping).

Item N8—Lighting & Ventilation (58.126d, e, 58.413,).

See the guidelines for Item A2—Lighting & Ventilation.

Light protectors and at least 50 F/C of light is required where the cheese is cleaned (careful examination of the cheese surfaces is required). 30 F/C of light is required in other areas.

The dumping and stripping (and the cutting and packaging) room shall be provided with filtered air. Air movement shall be outward from the packaging room toward the dumping room to minimize the entrance of unfiltered air into the cutting and packaging room. This requirement of the *General Specifications* can be satisfied with one air filtering system in the cutting and packaging room if there is sufficient air movement through the rooms. It is not necessary to check the efficiency of the filters, only that the air is filtered.

Item N9—Tables & Conveyors (58.128a).

See the guidelines for Item K18—Tables & Conveyors.

If the plant is dumping barrels of trim for use in a shredding operation, inspect the table, hoist, lance, conveyor, etc. for cleanup and condition (see the guidelines for Item K17—Cheese Dumping). Whenever possible, to be present during production to ensure the dumping is done in a sanitary manner.

Item N10—Hand Washing Facilities (58.127c).

See the guidelines for Item B21—Hand Washing Facilities.

Item N11—Housekeeping (58.126e, 58.127f, 58.146d).

See the guidelines for Item A7—Housekeeping.

Cheese Cutting & Shredding

Item N15—Room Construction (58.126, 58.151, 58.413).

See the guidelines for Item N7—Room Construction.

A separate room is required for the cutting and packaging operation. If other production activities occur in the cutting and packaging room, check that there is no chance of contaminating the exposed product or product contact surfaces.

Item N16—Lighting & Ventilation (58.126d, e, 58.413, 58.444).

See the guidelines for Item N8—Lighting & Ventilation.

The air entering the cutting and packaging room shall be filtered.

Item N17—Tables & Conveyors (58.128a).

See the guidelines for Item K18—Tables & Conveyors.

Item N18—Equipment for Cutting (58.128a).

See the guidelines for Item K21—Grinder Feeding Equipment.

Check the cutter and any precutters for cleanup and condition. Plastic push plates shall be as smooth as a No. 4 finish with no exposed threads, cracks, or crevices. Also, check for the proper radii in wire grooves to assist cleaning. When plates with damage are observed (cuts, gouges, nicks, etc.) recommend replacement. Plastic push plates with bolted construction should be dismantled for inspection, make appropriate recommendations.

Item N19—Equipment for Shredding (58.128a).

If the plant does not have any shredding equipment or does not request the code for shredding, grating, crumbling, or dicing of cheese show this item as NA. Otherwise, use this item to make recommendations covering all the equipment used in these operations.

Check the *Accepted Equipment List*. If the shredding equipment is not listed, follow the guidelines for Item A3—Pumps, Pipelines, & Valves.

Use caution when inspecting shredders or dicers, special woven metal gloves are usually worn to protect against injury when handling the knives. Shredders require extensive disassembly for manual cleaning (no accepted models are suitable for mechanical cleaning). Carefully check the knives, feed chute, outlet, and other product contact surfaces for cleanup and condition and make appropriate recommendations. Also, check the underside of the frame and

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shrouds. Nonproduct contact surfaces should be clean and in good repair and should not contribute to any unsanitary conditions within the plant.

Item N20—Equipment Sanitizing (58.444).

All product contact surfaces shall be subjected to an effective sanitizing treatment prior to use. Equipment which has been used and then sits idle for 2 hours or more should be rewashed and sanitized prior to being reused.

Item N21—Conveyor to Packaging (58.128a).

See the guidelines for Item K18—Tables &Conveyors.

Item N22—Disposition of Scrap (58.124b, 58.127f, 58.413).

See the guidelines for Item K20—Disposition of Scrap.

Cheese Packaging

Item N24—Wrapping Machine and Item N25—Shredded Cheese Packaging (58.128a).

Check the *Accepted Equipment List*. If the packaging machine model is not listed, follow the guidelines for Item A3—Pumps, Pipelines, & Valves.

Packaging machines for shredded cheese shall comply with the *3-A Sanitary Standards for Equipment for Packaging Dry Milk and Dry Milk Products, Number 27- .*

Inspect the product contact surfaces for cleanup and condition and make appropriate recommendations. Nonproduct contact surfaces should be clean and in good repair and should not contribute to any unsanitary conditions within the plant.

Some block-type packaging machines for small consumer cuts (such as Hayssen and Cryovac) utilize index chains for the in-feed. These chains should be removed from the machine and cleaned in a COP tank or with a high pressure washer. Carefully check the many crevices for cleanup and condition but do not criticize the use of roller link chains if they are clean.

If the plant is using a shrink tunnel, the exhaust should be vented outside the plant. Check the cleanup and condition of these ducts. The ducts should be designed to be easily cleanable and inspectable. The discharge end shall have a screen or self-closing louvers. If possible, check the discharge area for unsanitary conditions such as product residues and foul odors.

Item N26—Miscellaneous Equipment & Utensils (58.128).

See the guidelines for Item K36—Misc. Equipment & Utensils.

Include any ingredient feeders under this item. The FDA standards of identity allow the use of anticaking agents (sometimes called flow agents) on shredded cheese. These agents are usually sprinkled over the top of the shredded cheese as it travels to the packaging machine. Because these compounds are not dairy ingredients, the interior of the ingredient feeder does not need to meet product contact surface requirements. However, it shall have a cover and any parts that extend into or over the product zone shall meet product contact surface requirements. Also, check the area for dust control, the flow agents shall be dumped in a sanitary manner, the outer ply of the bags shall be striped, or if laminated bags are used they shall be vacuumed or brushed clean, before being dumped. The ingredient feeder should be wet washed each time the shredding equipment is washed. However, do not criticize the practice of dry cleaning provided the product contact surfaces are clean and they are stored in an area that is dry while the other equipment is being washed.

If an antimycotic (mold inhibitor) is used see the guidelines for Item C54.

Item N27—Scales and Coders (58.128m).

Record any deficiencies concerning construction, maintenance, and cleanup if the scale platform is a product contact surface. Otherwise, check that the scale does not contribute to any unsanitary conditions in the production area. It is not necessary to check the accuracy during plant surveys.

Item N28—Handling of Trim (58.124).

In order for cheese trim generated by a USDA approved cheese cutting operation to be used in the manufacture of other approved cheese products (regardless of whether the trim is used within the plant or shipped to another USDA approved plant), the cutting operation must meet the same requirements as one listed in Section I of the *Approved Plant Book* with the “Natural Cheese Trim” code. The cheese trim shall be properly classified, handled and stored. The term “cheese trim” shall apply only to good condition, clean cheese which is collected, packaged and stored in a sanitary manner. It is to be free of defects such as dirt, mold, and soft spots, and be suitable for human consumption. The most common sources of cheese trim are from natural cheese cutting and packaging operations.

The following guidelines apply to both Section I plants that request the “Natural Cheese Trim” code and all other plants that save cheese trim which is intended for use in the production of pasteurized process cheese or other products.

A. Collection Equipment.

Collection equipment shall be constructed of stainless steel, plastic materials which meet 3-A and FDA requirements, steel barrels (with plastic liners), or other suitable containers accepted by the Dairy Grading Branch. The catch bins may be built so they can slide into the framework or hang off the side of the conveyor or table. They shall not be placed on the floor unless they have legs. Alternately, they shall have sides a minimum of 6 inches high to protect the trim from contamination. If the collection pans do not adequately protect the trim from contamination, it shall be considered scrap and not for human consumption.

When cheese trim is saved for further processing, inspect the catch pans, collection barrels, pails, etc., for any deficiencies of construction, maintenance, or sanitation. Check carefully for hard-to-clean areas, milkstone, cheese remnants, broken seams, and exposed threads. All the areas above the collection pans shall meet product contact surface requirements or be provided with adequate shields.

B. Packaging.

Cheese trim shall be packaged in a sanitary manner which minimizes the opportunity for mold growth. To minimize the air in the container and reduce the opportunity for mold to develop, the cheese shall be pressed into the container and the liner folded to completely cover the surface. Containers which are partially filled at the end of the days operation may be finished

the following day. This product shall be placed in the cooler and be adequately protected during overnight storage.

In the instances where cheese trim is utilized in the same operation pressing is not required. However, the cheese trim shall be collected and stored in containers meeting the criteria under paragraph A above. In addition, the cheese trim shall be effectively covered to adequately protect the cheese from contamination and surface drying and should be properly labeled (see the guidelines for Item N29—Disposition of Trim Paragraph C. Labeling). Check the trim containers for condition of the trim and make a recommendation for prompt processing if there is mold development on the cheese.

C. Storage.

See the guidelines for Items B51—Room Construction - Coolers, B54—Lighting & Ventilation, B55—Temperature Control (except that the temperature shall not exceed 45° F), and B56—Housekeeping. Storage times for cheese trim shall be kept to a minimum. Check trim container labels for production dates (the cutting date). If any production dates are older than 20 days, make a recommendation for prompt handling and processing of cheese trim.

Item N29—Disposition of Trim (58.124).

In addition to compliance with the requirements of Item N69 for the handling of natural cheese trim, Section I plants that request the “Natural Cheese Trim” code shall meet the following criteria.

A. Approved Supply Plant.

For a cheese cutting operation to obtain approval for Cheese Trim, all cheese packaged at the operation shall originate from USDA approved dairy plants.

B. Returned Cheese.

Since the handling and storage conditions of cheese which has entered distribution channels cannot be evaluated, returned cheese is not eligible for inclusion with cheese trim in an operation approved for natural cheese trim. Because there is no way to monitor the trim for presence of returned cheese, the INELIGIBLE status shall apply to any cheese cutting operations (listed in Section I with the cheese trim code) which receive returned cheese.

C. Labeling.

The cheese cutting operation shall securely attach a tag which contains the following information to the cheese trim barrel or container.

1. “Natural Cheese Trim from Cheese Manufactured in USDA Approved Dairy Plants.”
2. Plant Number of Cheese Trim Operation (for example “55-425”).

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3. Production Date(s) of Cheese Trim (for example “12/11/98” or “12-11-98”)
4. Plant number of Cheese Manufacturing Operation(s)—Date of Cheese Manufacture—and types of Natural Cheese in Container.
5. Signature and Date by a Responsible Plant Official.

Example:

Mixed Cheese Trim		
Natural Cheese Trim		
From Cheese Manufactured in USDA Approved Dairy Plants		
Plant #55-123		
55-341	06/11/97	Cheddar
55-108	06/12/97	Colby
27-156	05/27-28/97	Edam
<i>/s/ Responsible Official 06/18/97</i>		

Item N30—Trim Press Room.

A press for edible trim shall be located in a processing room or area. If the plant presses scrap cheese into barrels a separate room or area and separate equipment should be provided for this purpose.

Item N31—Storage of Film.

Packaging film shall be protected from contamination at all times (taped box or poly bags). Do not criticize the practice of leaving enough packaging film for one day’s production near the point of use. However, during a cleanup the packaging film should be removed from the production area.

Item N32—Hand Washing Facilities (58.127c).

See the guidelines for Item B21—Hand Washing Facilities.

A hand wash sink shall be provided. Separate sinks in the dumping room and in the packaging room should be provided. However, one hand washing facility may suffice if it is convenient to

both rooms, provided that foot traffic from the dumping and stripping room into the cutting and packaging room is limited.

Item N33—Housekeeping (58.126e, 58.127f, 58.146d).

See the guidelines for Item A7—Housekeeping.

Cheese knives, scrapers, etc. should be stored neatly and in a sanitary manner when not in use. Paper, plastic, cardboard, and other waste shall be picked up and removed regularly and the floor should be relatively clean and free of cheese scrapings during production.

Casing Area

Item N35—Room Construction (58.126).

See the guidelines for Item A1—Room Construction.

Item N36—Lighting & Ventilation (58.126d, e).

See the guidelines for Item A2—Lighting & Ventilation.

Item N37—Housekeeping (58.126e, 58.127f, 58.146d).

See the guidelines for Item A7—Housekeeping.

Product Storage

Item N39—Room Construction - Coolers (58.126, 58.154, 58.412).

See the guidelines for Item B51—Room Construction - Coolers.

Item N40—Lighting & Ventilation (58.126d, e, 58.412).

See the guidelines for Item B54—Lighting & Ventilation.

Item N41—Temperature Control (58.126d, 58.412).

See the guidelines for Item B55—Temperature Control.

Item N42—Housekeeping (58.126e, 58.127f, 58.146d).

See the guidelines for Item B56—Housekeeping.

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General Items

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