

## SECTION 2: GRADERS AND FACILITY REQUIREMENTS

### I. Definition of Graders

#### A. Resident Federal-State Grader

A resident Federal-State grader may be either a Federal or State employee. Graders shall limit their activities to the official plant(s) at which they are stationed unless specifically assigned by their supervisor to perform grading service elsewhere. Graders are required to limit their activities to grading and related grading work as described in this Instruction and in their job description. The grader's primary responsibility is to accurately assign the correct grade and size to each lot to be graded. When requested by an applicant, the grader assigns class, quantity, and condition or any combination thereof.

#### B. Fee Grader

A fee grader is a Federal or State employee who is licensed and authorized to certify to interested parties the class, quality, quantity, or condition of shell eggs. Fee graders perform lot gradings in a designated area as assigned by their supervisor.

#### C. Grader-in-Charge (GIC)

In plants that require the services of more than one grader, the Federal-State supervisor will designate, in writing, one grader as the GIC who will be responsible for all official grading activities in the plant. All other graders in the plant will be informed concerning the authority of the GIC. The GIC will receive the mail, be the official point of contact between the grading service and the company, and assume the initiative in resolving any problems in connection with rendering grading service. He/she is responsible for assuring that other graders have access to all instructions. While the GIC maintains overall responsibility for the grading activities in multiple shift plants, each grader working independently will be responsible for the grading activities on his/her shift(s).

#### D. Mechanical Segregation Systems

Plant management may request to utilize mechanical segregation systems (checks, bloods, leakers, dirt detectors, or any combination thereof) by completing the USDA-AMS, Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program's Request Form to Utilize Mechanical Segregation Systems, Exhibit I. The completed form will be submitted to the USDA grader or Federal-State supervisor for review. Upon receipt of the request form, the USDA grader or Federal-State supervisor is to confirm that the mechanical segregation component(s) are scheduled for installation or have already been incorporated into the system. The Federal-State supervisor shall confirm acceptability of the installation of the equipment and the company's alternate procedures should the system malfunction.

If approved by the Federal-State supervisor or the Regional Office, plant management will agree to re-introduce trained employees to provide segregation at the point of the component malfunctioning. The Request Form to Utilize Mechanical Segregation Systems shall be filed in folder 2 of the Shell

Egg Grader's filing cabinet. The USDA grader is responsible for the continued monitoring of the function of the mechanical segregation component(s). Evidence of excessive checks, blood spots, or obvious dirty eggs in samples examined are an indication that the system is not functioning in a manner to meet the U.S. grade standards. Plant management must be advised to check the system and implement corrective action. When a malfunction of mechanical segregation system(s) occurs in an egg grading facility that is designed in a manner that does not allow accessibility for manual segregation, the packaging of eggs identified with the USDA grademark is not permitted until the mechanical system is repaired. Any failure to comply with the authorized agreement for use of the mechanical segregation component(s) will result in the termination of approval to utilize such systems.

E. Designated Company Official Letter

Plant management must provide the USDA Grader with a letter designating the company official(s) on each shift to contact for resolving problems in connection with rendering grading service. The designated company contact must be available at all times during an established shift. This letter must be prepared on company letterhead and signed by plant management. The designated letter is to be placed in file 2a of the Shell Egg Graders Filing System as listed in Section 12 of this Handbook.

An example is as follows:

August 31, 2012

Rohare's Egg Company  
10553 Street Road  
Anytown, MD 20220

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We designate, Shannon Peterson, Production Manager, as the company employee required to furnish the USDA Grader and other voluntary grading service personnel with information necessary for rendering official grading service.

We designate the following company employees/titles for the USDA grader to notify when specific problems arise relating to the day-to-day grading activities:

- Susan Merr, Processing Room Supervisor
- Bob Wilson, Packaging Supervisor
- Jose Lombardozzi, Loading Supervisor
- Bucky Goldstein, Clean-up Supervisor

Sincerely,

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/s/ Christine Hansen  
President, Rohare's Egg Company

## **II. Duties of a Shell Egg Grader**

A grader's primary responsibility is to accurately assign the correct grade and size to each lot to be graded. When requested by the applicant, the grader shall assign the class, quantity, or condition, or any combination thereof. Federal employees are required to make appropriate entries on the Work Report, Form PY-101, at the end of each working day. State-employed graders are to follow their supervisors' instructions for preparing time and attendance reports.

### **A. Biosecurity Requirements**

Biosecurity procedures established by egg producers and packers include a range of measures focusing upon reducing the risk of the transmission of avian disease and Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) in layer flocks to food safety. Recognizing that pet birds, waterfowl, seabirds, etc. are a vector for the transmission of avian disease and SE, current policy states that graders are to refrain from raising or working with small home flocks of poultry or possessing exotic birds.

When grading service is implemented at an egg grading facility that includes an associated egg production facility, plant management must provide a detailed description of any biosecurity measures/procedures to be followed at the processing plant by USDA representatives. The Food and Drug Administration's Regulations for the Prevention of SE in Layer Flocks identifies biosecurity as a major element of an egg producer's plan.

Consequently, the level of biosecurity may change depending on the status of a layer flock at the production site. These procedures shall be reviewed with the Federal-State supervisor for acceptance determination. Any impact upon providing grading service will be reviewed with plant management at this time. The review is to determine if the grading service can comply with the proposed biosecurity procedure (for example, a procedural change requiring grader's or supervisor's to not come into contact with any birds within the last three days prior to performing grading service at that facility).

When determined acceptable, the company biosecurity procedures will be placed in the USDA grader's files (file folder 2) for reference by graders performing relief grading service. All USDA representatives providing grading service at the processing plant will follow the accepted company biosecurity procedures.

### **B. Company Quality Assurance Standards**

As quality and food safety factors receive further attention, national brand distributors, volume food buyers, grocery chains, etc., have requested that egg suppliers comply with the standards described by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). The egg processors have responded to these requirements through internal quality assurance and food safety programs GFSI standards. To assure conformance, egg processors employ an independent third-party auditor to verify the program meets established minimum requirements. An egg processor's quality assurance and food safety program may include specific requirements that exceed that identified in this handbook, and may also require USDA representatives working in the processing facility to sign a document confirming knowledge for continued conformance with these requirements. The Federal-State supervisor shall be responsible

for the review and acceptance of proposed quality assurance procedures requiring USDA graders as third-party contactors for grading service to follow stringent procedures exceeding USDA minimum standards. When an egg processor requests USDA representatives to sign a document relative to a company's quality assurance and food safety program, the document will be forwarded to the Regional Director and the National Office for review prior to acceptance.

Recognizing that USDA daily inspection and grading records reflect the sanitary conditions and the quality of a significant volume of product packaged in a plant, a company representative may request authorization for an auditor to review related official records such as the Form PY-74 and PY-75. The review (not copying) by an auditor of official documents related to quality assurance and sanitation completed by the USDA grader may be authorized by the Federal-State supervisor under the provisions that such records will not leave the facility and be returned to the USDA grader for filing by the end of the established tour of duty. The Regional Office will be advised of all company requests for review of official documents related to quality assurance and sanitation.

### C. Safety

Observance of safety rules is an essential duty of each grader. Common attributes of an egg processing facility include the use of chemical compounds, potentially slick processing room floors, floor drains, electrical equipment, and moving conveyors, and forklifts. The USDA grader shall be aware of the conditions in the work area during processing. When a hazard is observed, report it at once to plant management and document the conditions observed. If correction is not satisfactorily completed, report the matter to your supervisor. For your own personal safety, you should:

1. Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling product.
2. Wash away at once any harmful materials which may come in contact with your eyes or mouth.
3. Keep hands away from eyes.
4. Report to plant management all wounds or infections observed for proper treatment.
5. Write down the names of any witnesses to an accident for possible future reference.
6. Remember, at all times, that you are working in surroundings in which accidents can and do occur. When a personal injury occurs, contact your supervisor immediately.
7. Wear helmets and hearing protection as determined by your supervisor.
8. Wear protective gloves and eye protection when monitoring the concentration level of sanitizing solutions and water treatment compounds. Corrective eyewear may be worn as eye protection if the grader is comfortable that adequate protection for

the eyes is provided.

9. Utilize safe lifting techniques as outlined in training resources provided by the Agency.
10. When determined necessary by the Federal-State supervisor, the company shall provide a device to transport samples to and from the candling booth. For example, an acceptable cart to move sample cases of eggs from palletizing area or storage to the candling booth.

#### D. Utilization of Stand-by Time

During periods of time when plants are not in operation, contact your supervisor. The graders are to utilize standby time for review of instructions and to provide necessary training for other licensed personnel and themselves. All reports, records, indexes, and filing are to be brought up to date. If all grading and administrative work is up to date, the grader is required to do one of the following:

1. Remain at the plant during scheduled duty hours.
2. Upon approval from the supervisor, take annual leave if departing the vicinity of the plant.

When it is known that the plant will not operate for 1 or more days, graders are required to contact their immediate Federal-State supervisor to determine if any temporary reassignment is available. Federal-State supervisors may, at their discretion, request notification of less than full-day standby for resident graders.

Notification may be done by memorandum, if time permits, or when immediate situations occur, telephone contact or an electronic means of notification at the company's expense shall be utilized. In the case of a State-Trust State, the grader shall notify their supervisor of the stand-by time situation, and be guided by the state's instruction.

Refer to PR-1, in the General Index for complete instructions.

### **III. Facilities and Equipment Required for Resident Federal-State Graders**

#### A. To Be Furnished by the Plant: [7 CFR 56.17 and 56.76(b)]

1. Booth Requirements
  - a. A candling booth adequately darkened, reasonably close to the work area, and of sufficient size to accommodate two individuals, two candling lights, and other grading equipment.
  - b. Two candling light(s) designed to provide high intensity light to allow recognition of defects in the content of an egg. The manufacturer or brand of

candling light will not be specified. All candling lights shall be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions including use of the proper bulb type and replacement parts. Recognizing that advanced technology and design of egg candling lights is available, the use of bright lights, such as Light Emitting Diodes (LED) lights in a candling unit is acceptable. Graders must be familiar with adjusting, focusing, and cleaning the candling light.

- c. A digital or electronic individual egg scale capable of being balanced and checked for accuracy at the time of grading. These scales must be graduated in  $\frac{1}{10}$ -ounce increments or less. Plants packing product based on metric weights must provide individual egg scales graduated in 1-gram or less increments.
- d. A digital or electronic scale, graduated in  $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce or less increments, capable of weighing the lightest and heaviest consumer packages packed in the plant.
- e. A scale graduated in  $\frac{1}{4}$ -pound or less increments for weighing shipping containers.
- f. Test weights sufficient in size to verify the accuracy of the lightest and heaviest unit of measurement weighed on any given scale located in the plant.
- g. An accurate metal stem thermometer.
- h. Plastic-coated paper plates or other similar type disposable plates to correlate the candled and broken out appearance of eggs. The plates shall be plain and without background designs.
- i. If deemed necessary by the Federal-State supervisor, a cart or method of conveyance for the transportation of samples to and from the candling booth.
- j. Test kits for checking the concentration level of the solution used for sanitizing eggs and monitoring the concentration level of potable water treatment compounds in plants having chlorinators. The kit must be designed for testing the compound being used.

For example: Several quaternary ammonium compounds are approved for use as a sanitizing agent. Instructions to convert titration kit results to the equivalent concentration of active chlorine in the solution must be provided. The manufacturer of the test kit is usually the best source of the equivalency table.

**Note:** Plant management is responsible for furnishing protective equipment including, general purpose gloves and safety glasses to all shell egg graders monitoring the

strength of potable water treatment compounds and shell egg sanitizing solutions. Alternatively, plant employees may be trained to perform the testing under the direct supervision of the grader.

## 2. Office Requirements

- a. An acceptable flashlight and batteries to perform pre-operative sanitation inspections in poorly lighted areas where additional lighting is required.
- b. Desk and separate four drawer filing cabinet. The desk and/or filing cabinet are to be equipped with an acceptable locking device. Adequate environmentally-controlled office space located in close proximity to the processing plant free from any recognized safety hazards.

After grading service is inaugurated for resident plants, it is the responsibility of the resident grader to determine that the facilities and operating procedures which were approved are maintained.

### B. To Be Furnished by the Federal-State supervisor:

1. Grading certificates, worksheets, and other required forms.
2. Complete set of instructions and indexes.
3. Official grading stamps.
4. USDA identification emblem to be worn by the grader.
5. LincPass card or official identification card (site badge).
6. Government locks for the files.
7. File folders for the grader's records.
8. USDA office sign

### C. Surveys

Before service may be inaugurated, the Federal-State supervisor or the assistant Federal-State supervisor shall perform a survey of plant facilities at all resident and temporary plant locations. A Plant Survey for Shell Egg Grading, Form PY-158, is to be completed and submitted to the National Office for approval. (Exhibit II). All plant facilities and equipment must be approved before service may be rendered (7 CFR 56.75 and 56.76).

A key component of the survey focuses upon verification that plant management has an established company rodent and pest control program or a service contractor. Recognizing that rodent and pest

control is also pertinent to maintaining compliance with the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act, Federal-State supervisors shall review, on a quarterly basis, the effectiveness of a company's rodent and pest control program. Records or observation of an increase in the frequency of dead pests in the traps; increased evidence of feces or other rodent activity; or no corrective action documented are evidence that a company's pest control program (either, in-house or by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party) is not being performed and implemented as schedule.

If a deficiency is recorded regarding application of the program in the immediate processing plant by company personnel or the service contractor and the corrective action with assessment of that action are not recorded, the program is failing to demonstrate compliance on a continuing basis.

When the program fails to demonstrate compliance, plant management will be notified in writing requesting a detailed response to the deficiencies and the actions to be implemented to prevent recurrence. The implementation and its effectiveness will be assessed during a subsequent visit to the establishment. When the proposed corrective actions presented by plant management do not provide comprehensive measures or the program is not effective as witnessed by rodent activity or pest infestation in the immediate processing area, the Federal-State supervisor will contact the Regional Office for guidance to address compliance.



USDA-AMS, Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program



REQUEST FORM TO UTILIZE MECHANICAL SEGREGATION SYTEMS

This form serves as a request to participate in the Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program's pilot program for replacing authorized graders with electronic equipment for the identification and removal of restricted class eggs.

I/We \_\_\_\_\_ request the use of electronic equipment for identification and removal of restricted class shell eggs from officially identified product and thereby eliminating the requirement for authorized graders. I/We have the equipment necessary to remove:

(Circle as applicable): Checks Leakers Dirties Bloods

I/We will maintain the equipment to proper operating parameters. I/We will abide by the USDA graders request to re-introduce trained graders should there be a malfunction with our equipment based upon results of examination indicating an increase in significantly out of grade product.

In the event of a malfunction of the mechanical segregation system when trained employees are not available or the design of the equipment does not allow access for manual segregation, I agree to suspend packaging of shell eggs identified with the USDA grademark.

This procedure will be utilized at the shell egg processing plant listed below.

The program will be implemented on (date): \_\_\_\_\_.

Plant Name and Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Plant Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Firm Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ (Print Name) (Title)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)

Federal-State Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature) (Date)

Retain current copy in file folder 2 of the Shell Egg Graders files.



**REPRODUCE LOCALLY.** Include form number and edition date on all reproductions.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

**PLANT SURVEY FOR SHELL EGG GRADING**

INSTRUCTIONS: Mark an "X" in appropriate blocks (If "No" explain in the "Remarks" section on page 2).

NAME AND ADDRESS OF PLANT (City, State, and ZIP)	DATE SURVEYED (Month, Day, Year)	PLANT NUMBER
	<input type="checkbox"/> INITIAL SURVEY <input type="checkbox"/> RE-SURVEY (Explain in Remarks)	<input type="checkbox"/> RESIDENT <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY

**1. TYPE OF SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> OFFICIAL IDENTIFICATION OF CONSUMER PACKAGING | <input type="checkbox"/> STATE OR LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL SPECIFICATIONS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED COMMERCIAL SPECIFICATIONS            | <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED EXPORT SPECIFICATIONS              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIALIZED GRADINGS (describe)               | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY SPECIFICATIONS                     |

**11. BUILDINGS, PREMISES, AND STORAGE AREAS**

	YES	NO
A. Buildings of sound construction and in good repair.		
B. Floors, walls, and ceilings reasonably smooth and readily cleanable.		
C. Covered floor drains provided where needed.		
D. Use of moisture impervious materials where appropriate.		
E. Parking and packaging storage areas clean, dry, and adequate.		
F. Adequate ventilation, heating, and cooling provided in areas where needed.		
G. Adequate precautions taken to prevent the entrance of rodents and pests.		
H. Outside premises free of trash, rubbish, weeds, and surplus equipment.		
1. Outside premises adjacent to processing areas are properly graded and well drained.		
J. Satisfactory system for daily removal and accumulation of refuse provided.		

**III. WASHING, GRADING, AND PACKING OPERATIONS AND EQUIPMENT**

TYPE OF WATER SUPPLY: MUNICIPAL \_\_\_\_\_ WELL \_\_\_\_\_

A. Potable water supply with an iron content of less than 2 parts per million.		
B. Water Chlorinators provided and functioning properly, if required.		
C. Processing areas maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.		
D. Processing equipment sanitarily designed and constructed to facilitate cleaning.		
E. Washers, nozzles, brushes, and compartments maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.		
F. Wash water temperature maintained at or above the required minimum.		
G. Accurate thermometers are available for checking wash water temperature.		
H. Prewetting water temperature maintained at or above the required minimum.		
1. Waste water from washers discharged directly to drains.		
J. Steam and vapors generated from the washing operation continuously exhausted directly to the outside of the building.		
K. Sanitizer spray system functioning properly by providing an adequate spray at the required temperature and concentration levels.		
L. Egg drying equipment clean, sanitary, and adequate to dry the maximum volume of washed eggs.		
M. Egg oiling equipment sanitarily designed, clean, and functioning properly. Oil filtered, if applicable, and free of off odors or obvious contamination.		
N. Mass scanning, scales, and packing equipment and conveyors clean and sanitary.		
0. Mass scanning area adequately darkened for accurate quality determinations.		
P. Benches, shelves, and platforms subjected to moisture constructed of metal or moisture impervious materials.		

IV. SHELL EGG COOLING FACILITIES	YES	NO
A. Processed egg coolers capable of cooling eggs in accordance with the Regulations		
B. Humidifying equipment available to maintain an appropriate relative humidity.		
C. All cooler rooms maintained in a sanitary condition and free from odors and mold.		
D. Accurate thermometers, hygrometers, or other recording devices provided in all coolers,		
V. TOILET AND HANDWASHING FACILITIES		
A. Toilet and handwashing facilities operational and adequate in number.		
B. Toilet facilities properly vented to the outside of the building.		
C. Hot and cold running water provided.		
D. Restrooms provided with soap, sanitary towels, or other hand drying equipment.		
E. Signs posted advising employees to wash their hands before returning to work.		
F. Restrooms maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.		
VI. STORAGE AND USE OF CHEMICALS AND COMPOUNDS		
A. Use only approved pesticides, rodenticides, and insecticides according to manufacturer's instructions.		
B. Use only approved egg detergents and sanitizing compounds according to manufacturer's instructions.		
C. Only approved egg oils and inks used in shell eggs processing operations.		
D. Chemical compounds stored in separate areas from edible food products.		
VII. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT PROVIDED TO GRADER		
A. Facilities		
1. Sufficient office space that is adequately lighted, heated, and cooled.		
2. Office desk and chair.		
3. Four drawer file cabinet with a proper security locking device.		
4. Two-person candling booth located in close proximity to processing area.		
B. Equipment		
1. Two hand candling lights with approved case light.		
2. Electronic digital individual egg scale graduated in 1 /1 0 ounce or less increments and test weights for calibrating.		
3. Electronic digital consumer package scale graduated in 1/4 ounce or less increments and test weights for calibrating.		
4. Bulk scales for weighing shipping containers graduated in 1/4 pound increments or less and test weights for calibrating.		
5. Accurate metal stem pocket thermometer.		
6. Hand-held flashlight and batteries.		
7. Break-out plate(s) for quality correlations.		
B. Test kit for verifying the strength of the sanitizing spray.		

REMARKS:

SURVEY MADE BY (Signature)	APPROVED (National Office Signature)	DATE
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