MEASURING THE AMBIENT STORAGE TEMPERATURE IN A TRANSPORT UNIT CONTAINING SHEL EGGS PACKAGED FOR THE ULTIMATE CONSUMER

The following guidance is provided for recipients electing to check the ambient temperature in a transport unit for shell eggs contracted for delivery under the USDA Commodity Purchase Program.

Regulations stated in 9 CFR 590.50 promulgated under the authority of the Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, state that shell eggs destined for the ultimate consumer must be stored and transported under refrigeration at an ambient temperature of 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7.2 degrees Celsius) or less.   Note that this refers to the temperature of the air surrounding the container of eggs not the temperature of the individual egg.

The following steps are provided for guidance in checking the ambient temperature inside the transport unit upon arrival or just prior to unloading the shipment:

1. Open the rear door of the transport unit sufficiently to place a stem thermometer inside the transport unit. Caution must be taken not to open the doors on the unit for an extensive period of time as it will allow the refrigerated air to escape impacting the amount of time required to determine an accurate measurement inside the unit. If the refrigeration unit is not running on the transport unit, opening the doors on the transport unit will prevent obtaining the actual ambient air temperature.

2. Close the door and allow approximately 10 minutes for the stem thermometer to adjust to the environment inside the transport unit. Note that measuring the ambient air temperature with an infrared hand-held thermometer is not acceptable. These hand-held units measure the temperature of a surface not the refrigerated ambient air temperature.

3. Open the doors and read the stem thermometer immediately to determine the ambient air temperature inside the transport unit

Contact the Contracting Officer immediately when the ambient air temperature in a transport unit exceeds 45 degrees F.