

# Chapter 8:

## Premises

### Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe the potential food safety risks associated with the location of a farm direct marketing business, including an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market
- Explain how the design, construction and maintenance of a facility can impact food safety
- Describe the factors that contribute to unsanitary premises
- Develop a food safety plan for your premises including standard operating procedures and record templates



## Chapter 8: Premises



### Liane and Pam Improve Their Stall at the Market

*Liane and Pam weren't happy with their booth. They were concerned that the tables supplied at one of the outdoor markets were in poor repair with considerable chipping and rough edges. At this market, their stall is located in the outside row bordering an unkempt empty lot. Pam and Liane are concerned about the pests and garbage that come in from the lot.*

*Liane and Pam decided to upgrade their stall by investing in tables and weather protection that provides shade and protection from rain and wind. They decided that since their site can be windy, they needed to protect their products from the dust. They decided on a waterproof canopy with sidewalls and weights that secure the structure.*

*While their dad could have easily made some tables from plywood, these would be difficult to clean and sanitize. They needed to find tables that were light weight, durable and easy to clean, disinfect and maintain. In the end they chose tables with plastic tops because the material is smooth and non-absorbent.*

*Now that the market has opened, Pam and Liane are pleased with their new structure and its layout. Everything goes smoothly until the wind starts to blow and the garbage begins to collect around the base of the sidewalls. Pam talks to the market manager about the lack of garbage cans. She also suggests that the cans need to have lids.*



## Hazards

Your food establishment **must** be of sound construction and maintained in good repair to minimize the presence of any chemical, biological or physical hazard. Contamination can occur directly by chemical residues or microorganisms, or indirectly through the contamination of air or water.

Food can become contaminated by pathogenic microorganisms from a number of sources such as:

- Hands, particularly where handwashing facilities are inadequate
- Floors, walls, ceilings and fixtures because they aren't cleaned or can't be cleaned effectively because of their design or construction
- Standing water, usually because of poor drainage or poor floor slope
- Improper handling, storage or disposal of garbage and other wastes

Food is also subject to chemical hazards if:

- Building materials used to construct the premises, sales tables, etc. are inappropriate for food
- Storage facilities for cleaning and janitorial supplies are poorly designed and constructed

Food can become contaminated by physical hazards such as:

- Broken glass from the wrong type of light fixtures used within the building
- Paint flakes or rust if the food establishment is not maintained

---

**Pathogen or pathogenic microorganism** – any bacteria, virus, mould or other form of life too small to be seen by the naked eye and capable of causing disease, illness or injury. Pathogens require moisture, temperature, proper pH and food source to grow.

## Premises Design and Construction

Marketing of safe, wholesome food products at any food establishment requires clean and uncontaminated premises. When you are looking for hazards, remember that you need to inspect all elements in the building and surrounding property including the driveway, parking lot, sanitary facilities, drainage, building design and construction.

### Location

Potential sources of contamination need to be considered when deciding where to locate your food establishment. Do not locate near:

- Areas prone to infestations of pests
- Environmentally polluted areas and industrial activities that could pose a threat
- Areas subject to flooding unless sufficient safeguards are provided

Standing or pooling water attracts insects and other pests to your location. Airborne dust is a potential source of contamination because microorganisms can be transported on small particles of dust or aerosols. If sites aren't paved, reduce dust by spreading dust control compounds over the site. Remove standing water by pumping or improving the drainage in the area.

*Unnecessary movement of food or personnel within a food establishment increases the likelihood of contamination. A properly designed facility will minimize the risks.*

*Facilities and their surroundings should not contaminate food. Conditions that lead to contamination include excessive dust, foul odors, smoke, pest infestations, airborne microbial and chemical contaminants and other similar conditions.*

---

**Food establishment** – a place, premises or vehicle where food intended for public consumption is sold, offered for sale, supplied, distributed, displayed, manufactured, prepared, preserved, processed, packaged, served, stored, transported or handled.

**Premises** – the interior and exterior of buildings and the surrounding property

**Dust control compounds** – chemical compounds, usually in liquid spray or powdered form, that when used properly help to minimize the amount of dust particles that become airborne during cleaning. Some examples of products available are Dustloc and Soiltac.

*Locate an outdoor venue in a protected area on a well drained, hard surface. Food handling areas should have overhead covering and side walls.*

### Outdoor Farm Direct Markets

Select the site for outdoor farm direct marketing activities carefully. Choose a site that:

- Is free of debris and not close to any pollution source
- Is sloped to prevent the collection of water
- Has roadways that are properly graded, compacted, dust proofed and free from potholes to prevent pooling water

Whenever food handling is involved, locate outdoor farm direct marketing activities and farmers' markets in areas that are protected from wind and on a paved surface or grass that is properly maintained. This will provide some protection against blowing dust and dirt, and pests that collect in long grass.

Ensure outdoor market stalls have a suitable roof or overhead covering that is in good repair. Clear sidewalls or light colored screening will aid visibility and provide some protection. All food contact surfaces **must** be constructed of smooth, impervious and easily washable materials.

*“Frequently, first time vendors purchase less expensive canopies for use in the market. They work fine on sunny days. However, the roof starts to drip with the first heavy rain. In my opinion, it’s worth the extra money to buy a canopy that has a water repellant roof.”*

Shirley Alton, farm direct marketer

Locate all outdoor food stalls at least 30 meters (100 feet) from portable restroom facilities. Within indoor markets, locate food stalls away from washrooms.



Figure 8.1 **Outdoor Sunshade Structure**

## Building Exteriors

Buildings are the first line of defense against contaminants. The exterior of the building should be designed, constructed and maintained to prevent entry of contaminants (pests, dust, smoke, dirt). Screen all vents and air intakes against insects. You need to keep the walls, roofs and foundations in good repair to prevent water leakage and pest entry.

You **must** maintain surrounding areas to control sources of contamination. Steps to consider include:

- Eliminate refuse and debris that attract insects and rodents
- Mow long grass and trim shrubs around the exterior walls of a facility
- Avoid storing materials that can serve as a refuge for rodents, birds and other pests

*Use a sunshade structure that protects your products from the elements including windborne dust.*

*Keep the area surrounding buildings free of debris and avoid storing materials against buildings.*

If pests are allowed to live directly outside the facility, they have a greater chance of getting inside and contaminating the premises. Routinely inspect the building exterior for holes where insects, birds or rodents might enter. Mice can enter a building through a hole the size of a dime. Repair immediately to keep pests out.



For more information on controlling pests, see Chapter 15: Pest Control.

*Farm direct premises should be clean and well maintained. Avoid having plants against buildings.*



Figure 8.2 Well Maintained Farm Direct Premises

### Building Interiors

Design your food establishment building to provide suitable environmental conditions, permit adequate cleaning and sanitation and prevent access by pests. The premises must provide adequate space for the farm direct marketing activities and for the fixtures and equipment used for these activities. The intended activities include everything related to the handling and preparing of food: displaying, sampling, storage and sale; storage of cleaning supplies; access for deliveries and garbage pickups.

Floors, walls and ceilings **must** be constructed of materials that are durable, smooth and cleanable and with no toxic effect upon food. Materials used must be able to withstand wear and tear and cleaning chemicals. Sound cleanable walls, ceilings and floors make sanitation possible while poorly constructed surfaces can be very difficult to properly clean and sanitize. Flaking paint or rust directly over food preparation, storage or sales areas may result in contamination.

*The interior of buildings must be constructed of smooth, durable materials that are easily cleaned. Properly finished walls and ceilings are easier to clean and will likely then be kept clean. Doors, windows and vents should be screened.*



Table 8.1 **Building Interior Requirements**

Fixture	Requirements
Floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The floor surface must be washable and unable to absorb grease, food particles and water.</li> <li>Floors should be smooth and free of cracks and crevices, and floor coverings need to be firmly attached to the surface beneath. They should be sloped sufficiently to permit liquids to drain to trapped outlets.</li> </ul>
Windows, Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Windows and doors should be close fitting, in good repair, appropriately screened to keep insects out and easily cleaned.</li> <li>Doors should have smooth, non-absorbent surfaces.</li> </ul>
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food premises <b>must</b> have adequate lighting. Good lighting ensures that your staff can easily check that areas and equipment are clean and spot any signs of pest infestation or problems with equipment.</li> <li>Light fixtures should be designed to prevent accumulation of dirt and be easily cleaned.</li> <li>Light bulbs and fixtures located in areas where there is exposed food or packaging materials should be covered to protect food from contamination in case of breakage.</li> </ul>
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The air within a food establishment must not contaminate equipment or food. Unclean air, excessive dust, odors or buildup of condensation are all potential sources of contamination.</li> <li>Ventilation should be adequate to prevent buildup of heat, condensation and dust.</li> <li>Ventilation openings should be equipped with screens. Good ventilation decreases the risk of cross contamination by pathogens.</li> </ul>
Working Surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working surfaces that come in direct contact with food, such as vendor tables at farmers' markets, should be in sound condition, durable and easy to clean, maintain and sanitize.</li> <li>They should be constructed of smooth, non-absorbent materials.</li> </ul>

*Adequate lighting helps to identify unclean areas. Shielding of lights prevents contamination in the event of breakage.*

*Food contact surfaces such as market tables and countertops must be in good repair and easy to clean.*



For information on approved construction materials and food contact surfaces visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) website for the *Reference Listing of Accepted Construction Materials, Packaging Materials and Non-Food Chemical Products* at [www.inspection.gc.ca/english/ppc/reference/cone.shtml](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/ppc/reference/cone.shtml)

Install all your equipment in the establishment so it is accessible for cleaning and allows the surrounding areas to be easily cleaned. Ensure the food establishment is free of unnecessary clutter because these areas become difficult to clean. Proper cleaning of the premises and equipment is essential for food safety.



For more information on cleaning and sanitizing of premises and equipment see Chapter 9: Sanitation.

*Contamination of food, utensils and equipment can occur when improper storage facilities are used. Store cleaning supplies, chemicals and signs in separate, designated areas away from food handling areas.*

*Provide an adequate number of washrooms that are supplied with hot and cold potable water, soap, drying devices and waste containers. Properly located and equipped toilet facilities are necessary to protect food and equipment.*

## Storage Areas

Food and equipment can become contaminated when improper storage facilities are used. You **must** store janitorial supplies (mops, brooms, buckets, etc.) and cleaning agents in separate areas away from food storage or sales areas. Make sure that you dispose of dirty water from wet floor cleaning into a service or mop sink or curbed cleaning facility with a drain that is conveniently located close to the janitorial supplies.

Store your tables in a separate area and off the floor. Store other items such as pesticides and marketing materials (signs, posters, etc.) in designated areas. Keep all your storage areas dry and pest free.

## Sanitary Facilities

Sanitary facilities include washrooms and hand washing stations. You **must** provide an adequate number of properly designed sanitary facilities for customers, staff and vendors.

Ensure that your washrooms are provided with a supply of hot and cold running potable water, soap dispenser, liquid soap, single use hand towels or drying devices and clean waste containers. Keep your toilet facilities clean, stocked and in good repair at all times by inspecting them throughout the business day.

For outdoor markets, provide at least one washroom for the use of the food handlers during operating hours and an adequate number of washrooms for customers.

### Hand Washing Stations

Your customers and staff must be able to wash their hands to reduce the risk of contamination. You can encourage this by:

- Locating hand washing facilities where vendors and customers can easily access them at all times
- Providing an adequate number that are large enough for effective handwashing
- Supplying hot and cold water or pre-mixed warm water
- Stocking soap in suitable dispensers and single use hand drying devices
- Supplying appropriate waste containers for water and garbage
- Posting hand washing notices in appropriate areas
- Ensuring facilities for cleaning of equipment and utensils are separate from hand washing



Figure 8.3 **Portable Hand Washing Station**

*A portable hand washing station requires a source of warm water (coffee percolator), container for waste water, liquid soap, paper towels and a garbage container.*

*Provide an adequate number of covered, leakproof garbage containers. Dispose of garbage when container is full and at the end of the day. The proper disposal of waste is critical for preventing the spread of pathogens and reducing problems with pests.*

*Conveniently locate a garbage container for customers to dispose of any containers used for food sampling.*

## Garbage and Waste Water Disposal

The disposal of waste is critical in preventing the spread of pathogens. All garbage **must** be kept in leakproof, covered containers. Using plastic bags in your containers makes them easier to empty and keep clean. Dispose of garbage when the container is full and at the end of the day. This prevents garbage from spilling over and contaminating the area. There should be an adequate number of garbage cans to meet the needs of your establishment.

Garbage containers must be kept in good repair. Replace your containers when they crack, begin to rust through or you lose the lid.

If you are offering food samples, place a waste container within the immediate area for the disposal of single use items such as portion cups.



Figure 8.4 **Conveniently Located Garbage Container**

For outdoor venues, there should be a receptacle for waste water from customers and vendors washing their hands and equipment. If nothing is provided, vendors should have a proper container to hold their own waste water. Waste water must be drained into a sanitary sewer and not onto the street or ground. A storm sewer is not a sanitary sewer.



## Evaluating Your Premises

Think about the premises where you sell your products. Identify any problems in each of the following areas and suggest possible remedies.

	Problem Area	Solution
Location		
Building Exteriors		
Building Interiors		
Storage Areas		
Sanitary Facilities		
Garbage/Waste Water Disposal		

## Maintenance of Facilities

Regular maintenance ensures there is little risk of contamination of food products. Although many farmers' markets are held in community facilities, as a market manager you have the responsibility to ensure that the premises are safe and regularly monitor the condition of the facilities. Any problems that you detect should be reported to the facility owner or management company. Follow up to ensure that the problem is corrected.

If you are a farm direct marketer with your own facility, have a maintenance program in place. Regularly monitor the interior and exterior of all buildings and correct any problems as soon as possible.

*Food establishments must have access to an adequate supply of potable water.*

*Ice must be made from potable water. Protect ice from contamination.*

## Water Requirements

Water can be a source of biological and chemical contamination. It can also serve as a pathway for spreading pathogens from a contaminated source to the food products which could cause foodborne illness.

Ensure all food establishments, including temporary ones, have access to potable water and have an adequate supply and pressure for the activities conducted on site. The facility **must** be supplied with hot and cold running water. Prevent cross connections between potable and non-potable water supplies.

Use water from an approved source such as a public water system or a private water system that is approved by the regional health authority (RHA) and tested as often as required by the RHA. Keep your water test results in your files for five years.

If you provide water from a holding tank, check with your RHA about requirements (minimum quantity, tank specifications, etc.). Sanitize all holding tanks and water lines from the tank with an approved sanitizing solution.



Contact your public health inspector for more information on sanitizing and approved sanitizers.

Ice used as an ingredient or in contact with food **must** be made from potable water. Protect the ice from contamination as you handle and store it.

---

**Potable water** – water that is safe for human consumption. It meets provincial water quality standards.

## No Animals on Site

Dogs, cats and other pets or animals are not allowed on the premises of any food establishment according to the Alberta Food and Food Establishments Regulation. Talk to your public health inspector about any special events you may be planning that would require allowing animals into the premises. You will be asked to meet the necessary requirements prior to the event.

Guide animals used by any person who is mentally or physically handicapped are allowed on food establishment premises.



Figure 8.5 No Pets Sign

In multi-use facilities, the animal living areas must be physically and operationally separated from food handling areas.

*No animals, except for guide animals, are allowed in any permitted food establishment.*

*Pets are not allowed within a food establishment. Post signs throughout the premises to remind customers to leave their animals at home.*

## Keeping Records

Although keeping food safe is a must, doing so consistently can be a challenge. Monitoring and keeping a written record of food safety activities is one way to ensure that activities are being done on a regular and consistent basis. Record keeping is also a good communication tool between you and your staff.

Records can protect you in the event that a problem occurs. They can help prove that you as a food producer have taken all reasonable precautions to ensure the food is safe.

The forms are easily developed on a computer. If you are not comfortable using a computer or one is not available, create the forms by hand and photocopy them. Be clear as to whose responsibility it is to monitor and keep the records.



Examples of record templates can be found in Appendix F: Record Templates.

Record keeping can be the most challenging part of an effective food safety program. Your records don't need to be very complicated, but they need to track what, who, when, where and how. You also need to record deviations and corrective actions.

Farm direct marketers should have a program in place to monitor the conditions of the facility's exterior and interior. These regular inspections should be recorded. Any problems and the actions taken to correct these problems should also be recorded.

---

**Deviation** – failure of a standard operating procedure (SOP); a problem.

**Corrective action** – procedures or activities to be taken when a deviation occurs and to prevent the problem from occurring again.

**Monitoring** – a planned sequence of observations or measurements to determine if SOPs are being followed.

**Standard operating procedure (SOP)** – a written description of a particular task undertaken to ensure safe food handling; a set of instructions describing the activities necessary to complete a task that reduces the risk of foodborne illness.



Your records should include:

- Inspections of the site (parking lot, driveway, etc.) and corrective actions taken to fix the problems
- Inspections of the exterior of buildings and corrective actions taken
- Inspections of the building interior and corrective actions taken
- Water sources and test results
- Facility maintenance schedules
- Waste disposal schedule
- Building blueprints, if available

## Staff Training

Food safety training is the key to food safety. It is an essential component of your food safety program. The responsibility for training lies with you, the owner or manager, of the farm direct marketing operation. All staff whether they are full-time, part-time or casual should be trained in the appropriate areas.

Your employees need to understand their role in ensuring food safety and the importance of following your policies and procedures. To make sure your employees understand what is required, they should be able to explain when an activity is to be done, and demonstrate how the tasks should be done. They should also be able to describe what corrective actions are to be taken if a deviation occurs.

Keep simple records documenting when training was conducted, who attended and the time spent reviewing specific safe handling practices.

Training can improve the efficiency of your operation and reduce wastage which results in cost savings. An investment in staff training also results in higher morale and reduced turnover because your employees feel like they are part of your team.

Premises training should focus on areas such as:

- Maintenance activities
- Garbage collection and disposal
- Cleaning and restocking of restrooms and hand washing stations
- Proper setup of market stall

*Record keeping is part of your due diligence. Document what needs to be done and then how it was done, when and by whom.*

*Write what you do (develop a written program).*

*Do what you write (implement it).*

*Prove it (records).*



## Food Safety Plan – Premises

*In your food safety plan, document the practices and procedures you implement to safeguard your food. These practices and procedures are known as standard operating procedures (SOPs).*

A food safety plan consists of the practices and procedures undertaken by your business or market to protect food products from becoming contaminated and controlling microbial growth. These practices and procedures should be explained in a written document and are referred to as standard operating procedures (SOPs). They are specific to your operation. SOPs need to be readable and to the point so that staff can understand and easily implement them.

An SOP should address the following:

- Purpose and frequency of doing the task
- Who will do the task
- A description of the procedure to be performed that includes all the steps involved
- How it will be monitored and, if required, where the activities are to be recorded
- Corrective actions to be taken if the task is performed incorrectly

A plan for the premises should include areas such as:

- Required maintenance activities
- Monitoring facilities for problems
- Collection and disposal of garbage and waste water
- Inspection and restocking of restrooms
- Water usage from approved sources
- Proper storage of water if required
- Proper use of storage area
- Use of appropriate materials for food contact surfaces
- Where and when to record the activities
- Staff training



Take the time to continue developing your food safety plan. Create a section in your binder for Premises. Use the above points to build the premises component of your food safety plan.

## Summary

The facilities, be it a farmers' market or farm store, should not be a source of contamination. Buildings and surroundings **must** be designed, constructed and maintained to prevent conditions that could result in a foodborne illness.

Food premises **must**:

- Have enough space for the equipment and the activities that occur
- Have adequate drainage on site
- Have adequate lighting and ventilation
- Be protected from pests and other contaminants such as dust, weeds and debris
- Be kept clean and maintained in good repair
- Have enough potable water available with sufficient pressure and temperature
- Have access to a sufficient number of toilet facilities and handwashing stations
- Have a disposal system for garbage, sewage and waste water
- Have covered garbage cans located in appropriate areas to prevent cross contamination
- Provide adequate storage facilities for items that are likely to be a source of contamination
- Use approved materials for food contact surfaces

A food premises that is well designed and properly constructed reduces the risk of food contamination and makes the task of cleaning and maintenance easier.

*A well designed and properly constructed food establishment reduces the risk of food contamination and makes the task of cleaning and maintenance easier.*

## Market Manager Responsibilities

As a manager of an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market you need to ensure that the market is operating within a safe environment. The premises must be kept clean and maintained in good order. If you detect problems with the facility, you need to bring these to the attention of the building owners or property management company.

You need to ensure that the market has a sufficient number of covered garbage cans that are emptied when full and at the end of the market day. Garbage should never be allowed to overflow the container.

Restrooms should be regularly checked throughout the market day and restocked. Hand washing signs should be posted in appropriate areas. Hand washing signs are available from your regional health authority.

Signs informing customers and vendors that pets are not allowed in the market should be posted at all entrances. You **must** enforce the no pet policy.

Market managers have a responsibility to ensure that tables used by vendors are in good repair and constructed of appropriate materials. Table coverings should not be a source of contamination.



### Food Safety Checklists

Review the Weekly Food Safety Checklist for Market Managers in Appendix M. Add any points on premises that are missing for your market. Remember you and your vendors should be using the checklists every market day.

### What's Next

Is a clean surface a sanitized one? Is old bleach still good? When is your cleaning cloth no longer clean? To learn the answers read the next chapter on sanitation and discover why an effective cleaning program is so important to your business.



## Resources

If you need more information about premises or have food safety questions about this chapter contact:

Safe Food Systems  
 Agri-Food Systems Branch, Food Safety Division  
 Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development  
 Phone: (780) 427-4054 Dial 310-0000 first for toll free access.



## Chapter Review

1. What quality of water is required to operate a food establishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What should never be allowed into a farmers' market except under special circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. In a food establishment what two areas of the facility should be monitored throughout the business day?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Why is dust a food safety concern? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Food and cleaning supplies may be stored in the same area?  
 True or False
6. List the four essential items that must be provided in washrooms or hand washing stations \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Answers to Chapter Review

1. **Potable quality.** Water must be safe to drink. If you are not using an inspected municipal water supply, have a water sample analyzed by the RHA at least annually.
2. **Pets or animals with the exception of guide animals.**
3. **Washrooms and garbage.** Washrooms should be well stocked throughout the day. Garbage cans need to be emptied.
4. **Dust particles carry germs, pathogens or harmful microorganisms that can lead to foodborne illness.**
5. **False.** Food must be stored separately to prevent risk of contamination.
6. **Warm potable water, liquid soap, waste container, single use hand towels.**