



Bonus Buy: Fresh Fluid Milk Information Sheet

Beginning October 2018, USDA will distribute fresh fluid milk (whole, 2 percent, 1 percent, and skim) to States who ordered this product through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Due to the perishable nature of the product and commercial packaging requirements, special food safety precautions and operational procedures need to be considered. This information sheet provides an overview of the product requirements and safe handling procedures.

Shelf-Life

Each container will have a “use-by”, “sell-by”, “best-if-used-by”, or “best-if-used-before” date of at least **12 days from the delivery date**. Plan to distribute the milk to program recipients as soon as it is received and before milk has passed the date marked on the container. Always distribute the milk with the earliest date first. Optimal temperatures throughout storage and handling are necessary for milk to remain at peak quality throughout its short shelf life.

Storage

Fresh fluid milk will be delivered **at or below 45°F** and the temperature of the product should be checked and recorded at delivery. If a shipment arrives at a temperature higher than 45°F, immediately notify your Regional Office for instructions. **DO NOT** automatically reject the shipment.

The shelf-life of fresh fluid milk depends on how it is handled. Follow these handling guidelines to maximize shelf-life:

- After the milk is delivered, immediately store it in a cooler set at or below 41°F.
- Do not let the milk sit outside of a cooler for extended periods of time.
- Store milk in the cooler as far away from the door as possible.
- Do not leave the cooler door open for extended periods of time.
- Regularly check and record the temperature of the cooler and adjust the temperature if necessary.
- Give milk to recipients last to minimize the amount of time it is out of the cooler before the recipient gets it home.
- Tell participants to:
 - Immediately store milk in a refrigerator set at or below 41°F.
 - Use milk as soon as possible.
 - Check for signs of spoilage before consumption including a sour odor, off-flavor, and curdled consistency.
 - When in doubt, throw it out!

DO NOT freeze fresh fluid milk to extend its shelf-life. Freezing milk will alter the flavor, texture, and overall quality of the product. Liquid expands when it freezes and unopened cartons of frozen milk may create a hazard in the storage facility. In addition, program recipients may not practice safe thawing methods, which could increase the risk of foodborne illness.

Commercial Packaging Requirements

Fresh milk will be shipped palletized and stretch wrapped in one-way cardboard or reusable crates. Please work directly with vendors who would like their reusable crates returned.

Questions?

The USDA is pleased to offer fresh fluid milk to TEFAP recipients. Given this is the first time fresh fluid milk has been offered, we recognize there may be associated challenges. Please contact your Regional Office with any questions or concerns.

