
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 802

AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S EGG STATUTES.

SUMMARY:

This bill updates Connecticut's egg statutes. It requires chicken eggs to be labeled, stored, handled, and graded in accordance with federal law. It prohibits the sale of adulterated eggs. Egg producers who sell eggs directly to consumers are exempt from current law, but the bill imposes minimal food safety requirements on them.

Current law defines an "egg-grading plant" as a person or entity that receives eggs from Connecticut producers for processing, distribution, or sale. The bill splits these responsibilities into two entities, egg-grading plant and egg distributor, and removes the limitation that the eggs be from Connecticut producers.

The bill grants regulatory authority over egg-grading plants to the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) and egg distributors to the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). It establishes annual registration fees for both egg-grading plants and egg distributors. Registrations, which are nontransferable, may be refused, suspended, or revoked for cause.

The bill allows anyone aggrieved by an order of either the DoAg or DCP commissioner to appeal the order and request an administrative hearing. Final orders may be appealed to Hartford Superior Court.

By law, anyone who violates the egg statutes will be fined up to \$50 for the first offense and up to \$200 for each subsequent offense.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 1 — EGG LABELING, STORAGE, AND HANDLING

Labeling

Current law requires all shell eggs sold or offered for sale for human consumption to be labeled with grade and size. The bill requires eggs to be labeled in accordance with federal law, and distinguishes between chicken eggs and eggs from other birds (e.g., turkey, ducks, quail, or guinea fowl).

The bill requires sellers of chicken eggs to label the eggs in accordance with the federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic and Egg Products Inspection acts. These acts require eggs to be labeled with safe handling instructions, nutrition information, and pasteurization information, if applicable.

The bill requires sellers of other birds' eggs to label the eggs in accordance with the federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic and Nutrition and Labeling and Education acts. These acts require eggs to be labeled with safe handling instructions and nutrition information, as well as the name of the species.

Storage and Handling

The bill requires (1) retail establishments to handle and store all eggs in accordance with the federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act and (2) egg-grading plants and egg distributors to handle, store, and transport all eggs in accordance with the federal Egg Products Inspection Act. These acts generally require eggs to be kept at or below 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

The bill specifies that all eggs must be held, stored, and transported at no more than 45 degrees, but for functional reasons, eggs may be tempered for processing for up to 36 hours at room temperature.

§ 2 — GRADING CHICKEN EGGS

The bill requires chicken eggs to meet at least one of the consumer grades the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established pursuant to the Egg Product Inspection Act. USDA allows edible eggs to be graded as AA, A, or B. The grades indicate the quality of the egg. (Current state law allows for eggs to be graded as AA, A, B, or C.)

As under existing law, nonconforming eggs must be sold as

undergrade eggs, checks, cracks, or dirties. Although the bill does not define these terms, USDA defines a (1) “dirty” as an egg with an unbroken shell with adhering dirt or foreign material or stains and (2) “check” as an egg with a broken or cracked shell but with the shell membrane intact so that its contents do not leak.

The bill, as under existing law, requires grading determinations to be made through a process called candling, which involves eggs being examined under certain lighting to determine their condition.

§ 4 — CONNECTICUT EGGS

The bill shifts from DCP to DoAg the duty to register egg packers who use the word “Connecticut” in their grading system. The eggs must continue to be produced on Connecticut farms.

§ 3 — WEIGHT AND SIZE REQUIREMENTS OF CHICKEN EGGS

Current law requires the net weight and size requirements for eggs developed by the agriculture commissioner, in consultation with the consumer protection commissioner, to apply to all eggs sold or offered for sale. The bill instead requires the net weight and size requirements developed by the USDA to apply to all chicken eggs sold or offered for sale in Connecticut. The bill does not specify weight and size requirements for eggs from other birds.

§ 5 — SALE OF NONCONFORMING EGGS PROHIBITED; EXCEPTION

The bill prohibits advertising, falsely labeling, selling, or offering for sale any eggs that do not conform to its provisions. Current law prohibits such activity for eggs that do not meet the standards for quality and size established by the agriculture and consumer protection commissioners.

The law prohibits the sale of inedible eggs. The bill also prohibits the sale of adulterated eggs, as that term is defined in federal law. The federal Egg Products Inspection Act defines an adulterated egg as an egg that is generally injurious to health or unfit for human consumption.

Current law also prohibits the sale of incubated eggs, with one exception. Incubated eggs may be sold as commercial feed or for other commercial purposes other than human consumption, if they are broken and denatured at the same location as incubated and in a manner the DCP commissioner approves. The bill instead requires the DoAg commissioner, or his designee, to grant approval.

§ 6 — EXEMPTION FROM EGG STATUTES

The bill exempts egg producers who sell directly to consumers (e.g., from the farm or at a farmers' market) from Connecticut's egg statutes only if the eggs are clean, stored at no greater than 45 degrees Fahrenheit, not adulterated, and labeled. The label must include the producer's name and address, the types of eggs if other than chicken eggs, the quantity of eggs, and safe food handling instructions. It cannot be misleading, false, or make a claim of grade or quality.

Under current law, egg producers who sell eggs directly to consumers are exempt from Connecticut's egg statutes, and do not have to meet any standards.

§ 7 — REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Current law requires the consumer protection commissioner to enforce the egg statutes and allows him to adopt regulations. The bill splits the enforcement of the egg statutes between the consumer protection and agriculture commissioners.

Specifically, the consumer protection commissioner, or his designee, must enforce the provisions relative to retail and wholesale distributors by inspecting them at a frequency he determines. The agriculture commissioner, or his designee, must enforce the provisions relative to egg producers and egg grading plants by inspecting them at a frequency he determines.

The commissioners may issue any notices of violation or orders needed to ensure compliance. They may also, in consultation with each other, adopt implementing regulations.

§ 8 — REGISTRATION OF EGG-GRADING PLANTS AND EGG DISTRIBUTORS

Egg-grading Plants

The law requires egg-grading plants in Connecticut to register with the agriculture commissioner. Registrations must be renewed annually in October. By registering, the commissioner grants an egg-grading plant a permit to receive eggs for processing. No one can receive eggs for processing without a permit.

The bill defines egg-grading plant as a person or entity who grades, washes, or packs eggs in Connecticut. It requires each location where eggs are graded, washed, or packed to be registered separately. It prohibits anyone from receiving, distributing, processing, or offering for sale eggs without a permit, presumably received from the commissioner upon registration.

Currently there is no fee for registering an egg grading plant. The bill establishes fees for registering and renewing a registration (see below).

Egg Distributors

The bill requires egg distributors in Connecticut to register with the consumer protection commissioner on forms he prescribes. Registrations must be renewed annually in October. An egg-distributor is a person or entity who receives packed eggs and distributes them in the original packaging to institutional, wholesale, or retail establishments. The bill prohibits anyone from receiving, distributing, processing, or offering for sale eggs without a permit, presumably received from the commissioner upon registration.

The bill establishes fees for registering an egg distributor and renewing a registration (see below).

Registration Fees

The bill establishes a graduated fee structure for egg-grading plant and egg distributor registration and renewals. The registration and annual renewal fees are:

1. \$20 for firms processing or handling fewer than 6,000 dozen eggs per year,
2. \$100 for firms processing or handling between 6,000 and 30,000 dozen eggs per year,
3. \$300 for firms processing or handling between 30,000 and 150,000 dozen eggs per year, and
4. \$400 for firms processing or handling more than 150,000 dozen eggs per year.

The bill does not establish fees for firms that process or handle exactly 6,000, 30,000, or 150,000 dozen eggs per year.

List of Egg Sources

Current law requires registered egg-grading plants to keep on file a list of all producers from whom they receive eggs. The bill instead requires all registered egg-grading plants and egg distributors to keep on file a list of the sources from which eggs are received and a list of accounts to which eggs are sold. The lists are subject to review by the agriculture and consumer protection commissioner, or their designees, as applicable, upon request.

Registrations can be Refused, Suspended, or Revoked for Cause

The commissioners may refuse to issue, suspend, or revoke a registration for cause. The commissioners, in doing so, must consider the applicant's or registrant's history of compliance with any written orders or notices of violation for violating the egg statutes or any laws or regulations concerning food storage, handling, sanitation, or safety; egg room sanitation; or egg disinfection, holding, packing, storage, or cooling requirements.

Registrations are Nontransferable

The bill specifies that egg-grading plant or egg distributor registrations are nontransferable.

Appeal; Administrative Hearing

The bill allows a person aggrieved by an order of either the agriculture or consumer protection commissioner, or their designee, to appeal the order and request an administrative hearing. The appeal must be in writing and received by the applicable commissioner within 10 days after the applicant received the order. An administrative hearing must be held within 45 days after the request.

An appeal must be limited to whether or not the conditions or violations cited in the order existed. The applicable commissioner or his designated hearing officer must issue a final decision based upon all the evidence introduced, applying all pertinent laws and regulations. A final order may be appealed to the Hartford Superior Court.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 21 Nay 7 (03/04/2013)