



# VOLUNTEER SORTING *Guidelines*



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HARVEST**  
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# **VOLUNTEER SORTING GUIDELINES**

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## 1. OFH FOOD SAFETY MISSION STATEMENT

Ozarks Food Harvest's Board of Directors, staff and volunteers are fully committed to distribute safe and legal food and household products to those in need within communities served. The Food Bank's staff and volunteers will do everything necessary to protect product that is transported, received, stored and distributed from contamination. Staff and volunteers will do everything necessary to ensure that temperature sensitive product is transported, received, stored and distributed at the appropriate temperature. Ozarks Food Harvest's staff and volunteers will not knowingly distribute product that is unsafe for human consumption.

## 2. FAIR PACKING & LABELING ACT



The U.S. Fair Packaging & Labeling Act prohibits the distribution of any food item (except fresh fruit and vegetables) without a label containing:

1. *The common name of the product*
2. *The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor*
3. *The quantity of the contents*
4. *The common name of the ingredients.*

*Everything that we send out has to follow this law with the exception of fresh produce and eggs.*

## 3. ALLERGENS

The Allergen Control Program identifies procedures that address allergens and allergen-containing products throughout the food bank facility, starting at receiving and continuing through sorting and distribution, including the following:



Figure 1: The "Big Eight" Allergens: Tree Nuts, Peanuts, Soy, Egg, Milk, Fish, Wheat and Shellfish.

- *Preventing cross-contamination during receiving, handling, storage, and shipping.*
- *Defining cleaning procedures to remove spills to prevent allergen cross-contamination and follow-up inspection procedures to verify contaminant control and removal.*
- *Conducting personnel awareness training and education.*
- *Clean and sanitize all surfaces/utensils between sessions/projects.*
- *Be observant for the possibility of cross-contamination.*

## 4. GLASS / BRITTLE PLASTIC SAFETY

No glass, brittle plastics (acrylic) or ceramics are to be used in areas where the potential for contamination might exist, except where absolutely necessary or where removal is not immediately feasible.

*No glass, brittle plastics or ceramics will be brought into the production areas (warehouse, sorting room, docks etc.) with personal belongings.*

### Procedures to address breakage incidents:

In any circumstance in production areas, if breakage of glass or brittle/hard plastic occurs, the following procedure must be followed:

1. *Stop picking or sorting immediately.*
2. *Any product or packing material immediately adjacent to the incident site or product and materials otherwise suspected of contamination should be isolated and inspected for the presence of glass or brittle/hard plastic.*
3. *If evidence of contamination is observed, ALL product and/or materials must be disposed.*
4. *All breakage should be recorded on an incident report that states what was broken, when and where the incident occurred, what products or materials (if any) were affected, and who performed the clean up procedure. An authorized supervisor must sign this form validating that the cleaning was effective and the area is safe to resume normal operation.*
5. *These forms should be maintained on file for future reference.*
6. *If breakage happens in sorting room, a volunteer must find a Volunteer Coach or Supervisor to clean up product.*
7. *When broken glass/brittle plastic is/are found anywhere in the area, put a HOLD on all activities (anyone can do this.)*
  - Conduct a thorough inspection of all open, uncovered products, packaging materials, etc. in the immediate area.
  - Immediately inform a Supervisor.
  - Wear protective disposable gloves.
  - Remove large pieces of glass or brittle plastic and place in the garbage bin.
  - Sweep up the rest of the glass/brittle plastic shards in the area.



- Wash all affected areas thoroughly with water or with a damp wipe-all.
- Fill out a Glass and Brittle Plastic Incident report and give to inspecting Supervisor.
- Area must be checked by a Supervisor before resuming work in the area.
- Supervisor reviews incident report, signs and turns in report for record keeping.
- Return cleaning equipment and dispose of protective equipment
- Wash hands before returning to work.

## 5. GENERAL

### Purpose

Use of these guidelines will yield more consistent, higher quality, and safer products. This will increase the customers' (agencies') satisfaction, more quickly train new volunteers, and improve finished product quality.

### Product Notices

The Volunteer Coach must review and post notices at the start of each shift identifying the following:

- *Current cut-off dates for acceptable items (food, baby food, formula, etc.)*
- *Product defects*
- *Health hazards*
- *Recalls*
- *Other special instructions*

### Evidence of Rodents

Before unloading a box of donated items, inspect it for obnoxious odors, mouse droppings, and nibbled packaging. Discard the banana box and all food items in the box that can't be cleaned and sanitized. This includes food packaged in cardboard, pasteboard, plastic, and foil. Clean and sanitize all remaining product such as canned and jarred food. This protects those using the food from the possibility of becoming ill.

### Date Indicators

Many products (primarily food) have Sell By, Use By or Expiration dates printed on or stamped into the carton, label, top or edge of jar lids, or the ends of cans.



#### Examples:

- Campbell's soup can: JUL 2003 (this means July 2003)
- Colgate toothpaste: 10APR02 (this means April 10, 2002)

Some products bear a manufacturing code. Do not confuse these with date indicators – ignore them.

#### Examples:

- Stop & Shop beans can: 0282C 13:36 XPK XQ
- Contadina tomato paste can: 0216HFT164:18

Most products have extensions on the expiration dates that are provided by the manufacture, USDA, FDA, etc. A list of these will be provided by OFH. Products whose date is later than the date posted by the Volunteer Coach are acceptable. Discard those with an earlier date. **Products that do not have a date are acceptable!** Look for signs of age such as rust and yellow or stained labels etc.

In addition, seeing a brand from a long-closed store may identify outdated products. Discard these products.

## Bulk Packaging

Some items have several products fastened together, usually with cardboard or plastic shrink-wrap (packs of drinks or pudding, cans of tuna fish, and dried soup packets). Remove the wrapping and inspect each item for acceptability and proper labeling. If individual items do not contain the required labeling, cut the label from the bulk pack, make copies and tape it to the individual items.



## Appearance of Items

All items should be clean. Dirt and other contamination such as dust, dirt, or food **must** be removed by wiping with a dry paper towel or with a towel moistened with a sanitizing solution provided by the Volunteer Coach.

Do not wash jars of food. Washing may drive contaminants under the edge of the lid. When the jar is opened, contaminants may go into the food. Wipe jar off with a wet sanitizing rag.

Packages that show signs of spilled liquid (even if the packages are dry) should be discarded because the unknown liquid may be toxic (many cleaning products are poisonous). Bulk-pack cartons containing hidden individual food items (for example, Kool-Aid or fruit drinks) that show signs of leakage should be opened, food items inspected, and leaking items discarded. If individual items do not contain the required labeling, cut the label from the bulk pack and tape it to the individual items.

## Tape Usage

Use tape to repair usable products (for example, torn cartons, loose labels, and cartons with unsealed flaps). Never use tape to reseal containers. Tape should only be used to improve the appearance of boxes, cartons and labels.

Businesses donating items frequently use unmarked tape or pricing stickers to make repairs. This is most common on bagged items like rice, beans, sugar, or flour. Remove this tape or pricing sticker and inspect the product. The product may be distributed if there is no damage to the packaging.

## Tamper-proof seals

Different types of seals protect the contents of many products against tampering.



The container may have a paper, foil, or plastic sheet glued to the edge under the lid. Remove the screw or snap-on lid and examine this seal. Discard the item if the seal is pierced, not adhered to the edge of the container, or if there is visual evidence of product contamination.

Some bottles may have a plastic or metal cap attached by small links to a ring fastened around the neck of the bottle. If these connecting links are broken, discard the item.

A bottle cap or jar lid may have shrink-wrapped plastic around it. If this is completely broken, discard the item. If the seal is slightly damaged but shows no tampering was possible, retain the product.

A paper seal may be glued around the cap and neck of a bottle. If this paper is torn, discard the item.

## Condition of “Banana Boxes”

Remove the bottom sheet. Check it and the box for excessive dirt, spillage, or other contamination. Discard boxes and sheets that are not reasonably clean; this prevents contamination-caused illnesses. Remove plastic bags, dirty papers, and any other material that may be in the box.

Check the box’s bottom flaps to assure they are securely fastened. If not, use clear box tape to repair them.

Replace the bottom sheet with a piece of cardboard if the bottom sheet is dirty.



## Packing “Banana Boxes”

Place liquids upright if their height is less than the box depth– this reduces the possibility of damage due to leakage.

Stack products so that their height is less than the box depth. The box lid will sit properly and the boxes will stack evenly on the pallets.

All boxes should have no more than 1/3 of the same type of item. For example, the Canned Vegetables box should have no more than 1/3 carrots of all brands.



The weight of each box should be no more than 40 pounds. A box that reaches its physical capacity before the weight is achieved is acceptable since agencies pay by actual weight, not by the number of boxes.

## Disposal of Unacceptable Food Items

Unacceptable food items will be discarded according to OFH guidelines. Most dry product, produce, etc. will be put in a tote to be collected by pig farmers to keep it in the food chain. Items not suitable for pigs are coffee, grated cheese (typically from prepackaged meals), and dried beans. The Volunteer Coach may designate other unsuitable items (for example, products that may be contaminated with insects during the summer months). Discarded food and non-food items not suitable for the hog farmer will be bagged and put in the trash dumpster, and taken away by a trash hauler. All eggs to be discarded will be double bagged and placed in the dumpster. All meat will go to the dumpster.

***All contaminated pet food must go in the dumpster. (NO PET FOOD TO HOG FARMER.)***

## Cardboard

All cardboard will be broken down and put in the recycle bin outside the sorting room.

## Marked Items

The donating company may mark some products. Discard those with markings that indicate a defect (for example, NG, No Good, Damaged, or Rejected). Accept those marked with an “X”. This mark usually identifies the product for removal from the store’s stock.

## 6. RECALLS

Hard copy of all Feeding America recalls

- *Maintain a record for 90 days*
- *All recalls are to be posted on the whiteboard for 30 days*

Volunteer Coaches will be aware of the current recalls and will instruct the volunteers to set a side product by manufacturer for supervisors to check status.

If product is found to be unacceptable, it will be recorded on the sorting room product trace form and handled according to the recall.

If product is acceptable, it will be boxed for distribution.

The volunteer coaches will monitor all product sorted daily for recalls. Record findings on product trace form and turn them into the compliance manager daily.

### Recall Disposal

Follow any special instructions provided with the recall notice.

If no special handling instructions – render product unusable prior to throwing it away (open packages and dump directly into dumpster).

### Recall Test Program

Conducted twice annually, a product which has been both shipped and is still in stock, will be selected at random to test recall results, timing, and success rate.

## 7. CANNABIS/MARIJUANA EDIBLES

Cannabis Edible Example



Children's Candy Example (Non-Medicated)





Food products containing cannabis or hemp extracts, such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) (also known as “edibles”), have emerged as a popular facet of the legalized marijuana and hemp market for both recreational and medicinal use. Some edibles are designed to look like other food products, which can make it difficult to tell them apart from foods that do not contain cannabis.

Edibles come in many different forms—including baked goods, candies, gummies, chocolates, lozenges, and beverages—and may be homemade or prepared commercially. These products are often intentionally made to look just like the food products they imitate.

***These products must be removed from the sort project immediately and be given to a supervisor.***

## 8. NON-PERISHABLES

### Food in Cans

Sealing food in airtight cans protects it from contamination, in fact an early name for food-containing cans was “air-tights”. Damage to cans may cause bacteria to contaminate food, making people ill and even killing small children. Damage to seams is the easiest way for a can to lose its’ seal.

The inner surfaces of cans are coated with a protective plastic film that prevents metal from contaminating the food or causing an unpleasant taste.



**Cans are constructed in two ways:**

***•3-piece can: a round cylinder with a welded or soldered side seam, and squeezed-in-place lids at the top and bottom.***

***•2-piece can: a formed metal cup (without a side seam) with a top lid squeezed-in-place.***

### Dents



Sharp dents on the squeezed lid seams (top or bottom of a 3-piece can or the top of a 2-piece can) are unacceptable because these offer the greatest possibility of allowing bacteria to enter. If the dent extends below the lid’s seam and into the side of the can, discard the item.



Accept cans with a long and flat dent on a seam, unless the dent is tipped inward.

Dents that peel back the lid seam or bottom seam are unacceptable.



Dents that cause sharp corners or sharp creases are unacceptable because the can’s inner protective coating may tear, exposing food to contamination by contact with the can’s metal.

Although there is no seam on the bottom of a 2-piece can, a sharp crease might tear the inner coating. If you can place a fingernail or a tool with a thin edge in the edge of the crease of the can, discard it.



Cans with side dents causing points at the ends of the crease are not acceptable. When the crease is so deep that it also deforms an end of the can, causing it to wobble, discard it.



Discard severely crushed cans that have the side folded in on itself.

Dents on pull-top can lids (used for drinks, soups, and single serve meals and some fruit) may cause unseen tears in the very thin area that rips when opening the can. These tears may allow bacteria to enter. In addition, the rip area may leak if struck by another item during packing. Discard these cans

**Damage to the pull top lid is not allowed. Exception: severe dents are acceptable in all dried food containers, such as coffee, when there is no leakage.**

### Bulges



Bacteria release gas when they feed on canned food. Swollen cans are a sure sign that contamination is present. You can detect a slight amount of swelling by pressing on the end. If the end can be pushed in, contamination is present. Discard the product. Even if the end springs back after it is released (known as “oil-canning”), discard the product.

### Rust

Rust that remains after wiping **may** indicate rust pitting that is deep enough to cause the can to be eventually no longer airtight. **Discard the can.**

### Food in Glass Containers

Glass jars with dents on the lids indicate glass chips may be in the food. **Discard these jars.**



### Jars with a Vacuum Seal

Some jars are sealed with a vacuum to make them airtight. The vacuum forces a seal under the metal lid against the upper edge of the jar. An inward dished lid (usually marked with a printed pop-up indicator) shows the jar has a vacuum and is airtight.

A lid with a raised center that may or may not spring back after being depressed (“oil-canning”) is not airtight and must be discarded.



Note: An item may have both a pop-up seal indicator and a tamper-proof band. If the band is broken and the pop-up seal is intact, the item is acceptable. If the band is intact, but the indicator is popped up, discard the item.

Other containers have a glued sheet (paper, foil or plastic) under the lid that may be dished inward by a vacuum. Discard the item if this seal is pierced, not adhered to the edge, or if there is visual evidence of contamination.

### **Jars or Bottles without Vacuum Seal**

Food that is very resistant to bacterial contamination (for example, syrup and honey) may not be vacuum-sealed. A screw-cap and seal protect the contents from tampering and physical contamination. Discard the item if there is visual evidence of contamination or if the seal is broken.

## **Food Deterioration**

Discard items that have visible abnormal food conditions or foreign material.

## **Food in Other Containers**

When cardboard cartons with an inner sealed package (for example, cereal, gelatin, rice, or cake mix) are damaged, shake the carton in several positions. If food comes out, discard the item. If no food comes out, remove the inner package and check for damage. If there is no damage, replace the package in the carton and use tape to repair the carton damage.

When cardboard cartons have no inner sealed package (for example, most pasta, flour, and pierced boil-in-the-bag food), and food comes out, do not repair it – reject the item.

Styrofoam plastic containers (such as those used for dried soup mix) may have a paper or thin plastic seal adhered to the edge of the container. Reject the item if the container or seal is damaged.

## **Candy**

Candy bars and other products with hard chocolate that have melted and re-solidified change their taste and consistency. Discard all hard chocolate products that have been melted.

## **Non-food items**

### **Medical products**

*Do not keep any internal use medications. All of these items must go in the trash.*  
*Allow bandaids, lotions, skin creams, and antiseptics, only if in date. NO EXTENSIONS*

### **Sex-related Products**

*Agencies will not accept sex related donations. Discard all of these products:*

- *Contraceptives, both male and female types (they may be damaged)*
- *Sex enhancement items, for example, lubricating creams*
- *Pregnancy tests (results may not be accurate)*

## Plastic-wrapped Items

These are typically paper or plastic products (for example, table napkins, disposable dinnerware, toilet paper, and towel rolls). Torn wrapping presents the possibility of contamination.

- Single item: *retain it for use at the Food Bank or discard it because of contamination.*
- Multi-pack item: *remove items exposed by a **small** tear, and seal the tear with tape.*
- Feminine pads: *individually wrapped products are acceptable – seal the torn bulk wrapping with tape.*
- *Discard all boxes of facial tissues with torn packaging.*

## Liquid Products

**Tighten the cap** and place a strip of tape across the cap to show the cap is tight. This reduces the possibility of the cap becoming loose and leaking liquid after it is packed.

Place tape across flip-up lids to prevent them from being snagged and opened after being packed.

## Chemicals

Many chemicals are poisonous or can cause injury. Discard all pesticides, insect repellants, and oven cleaners (unless they are “foam-free”).

## Latex Gloves

*Discard all latex gloves because many people have a severe allergic reaction to latex.*  
Accept non-latex gloves.

## Flammable Material

***All flammable products (for example, matches, lighters, lighter fuel, and charcoal lighter) are unacceptable. Give them to the Coaches or Supervisor for proper disposition.***

## Bottled Water

- *Pack non-carbonated water in the water box or tote.*
- *Pack flavored water in the juice box or tote.*
- *Pack carbonated water in the soda box or tote.*

## Pet Supplies

Use the same sorting rules as those for human use items.

***All contaminated pet food must go in the dumpster. ( NO PET FOOD TO HOG FARMERS )***

## Alcohol

Even a trace amount of alcohol may affect those afflicted with alcoholism. Examples of products with tiny amounts of alcohol include some beverages, sauces, vinegars, flavoring extracts and vanilla. Non-food products containing non-consumable alcohol, such as grooming aids, are acceptable.



## Missing Caps

*Discard products that have missing caps because they may cause damage by spilling or spraying their contents when packed.*

Damaged caps that can be repaired with tape are acceptable. Replacement caps, held in place with tape because they are not the proper size, are acceptable.



## 9. PERISHABLES

### Fridge Sorting Guidelines

**Refrigerated products can only stay out of the refrigerator for 30 minutes.**

### Food Requiring Refrigeration

***Discard products that require refrigeration that HAVE NOT been kept cold.***

(for example, some pickles, salad dressings, and Jell-O products) because food deterioration has occurred, or will occur shortly.

This does not include products marked for refrigeration **after** opening.

### Dairy, Eggs, Produce, Etc.

- *Expiration dates: Watch closely as refrigerated goods can go bad very quickly*
- *Keep all products that are within their extension of the expiration date. Even if it is at the end of its expiration. Some refrigerated product can be frozen to extend the life of the product. Refrigerated moves very fast and could be used the same day. OFH Staff will check this product daily and dispose of – if necessary.*
- *Packages must be intact so that the product inside has not been exposed to any possible type of contaminate.*
- *All refrigerated meat must be placed in banana boxes to be transferred to frozen meat boxes.*

### Dairy

- *Separate dairy items from mixed refrigerated items. Milk will have its own box and pallet.*

### Mixed refrigerated boxes

- *Make the best variety possible in each banana box*
- *Stack boxes 5 high on a blue pallet*

### Juices

- *Place juices and other refrigerated beverages in separate banana box or tot*

### Eggs

Eggs come in boxes containing pre-sorted dozen, 18 pack or 2 dozen packages

- ***Anyone sorting eggs must wear nitrile gloves when sorting and cleaning eggs.***

- *Inspect each egg for breaks. If broken, dispose of the egg into a trash can containing a dual layer of trash bags to prevent spillage.*

## Produce

- *Full pallets of produce can be checked and restacked on a pallet.*
- *Produce should be sorted into either mixed produce boxes or totes.*
- *Look for signs of mold or any type of growth on produce*
- *With some produce (such as lettuce) we can remove outer layers that are brown and still distribute the remaining product.*
- *Some produce has a protective outer layer (corn, onions). Do not remove the outer layer; this will actually increase the susceptibility of pathogens.*
- *Bagged greens (lettuce, spinach, romaine, etc.) are one of the most susceptible items we handle.*
- *Be very aware of any slime or moisture.*
- *Keep bananas separate from other produce.*

## Frozen Sorting Guidelines

**Frozen products can only stay out of the freezer for 1 hour while sorting.**

( Frozen - any food that must be stored in the freezer. )

### Frozen Meat (Raw)

- *Frozen meat must be separated by type and then sorted into banana boxes for distribution. ( i.e. Beef products must stay with beef products, Poultry must stay with poultry, Pork stays with pork and so on.)*
- *Bacon, if fully cooked, may be put into mixed frozen meat boxes with vacuum-packed lunchmeats.*
- *When inspecting frozen raw meat, make sure there are no holes in the packaging.*
- *All processed meat must be frozen within seven days of expiration.*
- *Fully cooked or ready to eat meat is to be sorted into its own banana box.*
- *If meat appears to be discolored (green/gray) or has a bad smell, dispose of it.*
- *Bar codes on meat must be marked through with a black permanent marker*

### Mixed Frozen

- *Make the best variety possible in each banana box.*
- *Stack banana box on a blue pallet. Stack boxes 5 levels high.*

### Bakery

- *Sort into either mixed bakery boxes or mixed bakery totes.*
- *Dispose of broken packages*
- *Look for signs of mold and freezer burn, if present dispose of these items.*
- *Make sure items follow U.S. Fair Packaging and Labeling Act.*

## PLAN MODIFICATIONS

Date of Change	Describe Modification	Changed By
03-04-2021	Reviewed and updated	Scott Boggs