

Department of Agriculture

Agency 495

Audit Report	Finding Number	Finding and Corrective Action Status
1035267	2023-001	<p>Finding: The Washington State Department of Agriculture did not have adequate internal controls and did not comply with state law and Department policies related to egg production and egg packing plant inspections.</p> <p>Corrective Action: The Department agrees with the audit finding regarding inspection frequencies not conforming with state regulations and the lack of a current inventory of egg handlers needing inspection. The COVID-19 pandemic and the reemergence of highly pathogenic avian influenza in 2022 were contributing factors in the deficiency. The Department also agrees that one inspection criteria was not available for use during several inspections in the primary reporting system.</p> <p>The Department is committed to improving internal controls to ensure that inspections are properly documented in either the primary system or the backup reporting option.</p> <p>The Department does not concur that a checklist method of inspection is statutorily required or necessary for a thorough inspection and/or proper documentation of inspection findings. The Department has a thorough inspection process of all facility types and a robust training plan for inspectors that includes classroom training, study of all applicable laws and regulations, and extensive on-the-job training with experienced inspection staff. Inspectors can expertly discern any violations of inspection criteria and have ready access to the necessary resources and tools to effectively perform their job duties.</p> <p>The Department has already taken the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to obtain an understanding of the nature and frequency of federal monitoring and inspection programs specific to egg facilities in our state. This information will be considered when developing plans to strengthen the Department’s inspection program. • Reestablished access to the Department of Revenue’s (DOR) reporting service to obtain a current list of businesses in the state with egg handler/dealer endorsements. • Added the missing regulation reference to the primary reporting system prior to the close of the audit. <p>The Department will take the following corrective actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct rulemaking activities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Verify the Department’s legal authority to create exemptions in the state laws related to egg inspection frequency. ○ Obtain input from egg industry facilities on suggested inspection frequency by the Department that is appropriate in view of current USDA and/or FDA visits received.

Department of Agriculture

Agency 495

Audit Report	Finding Number	Finding and Corrective Action Status
1035267	2023-001 (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consult with the USDA and FDA to determine the appropriate risk level classification for shell eggs and inspection frequency for egg producers and packers who are not currently subject to federal inspections. ○ Complete rule filing activities as needed, including public hearings. ● Establish a process to maintain a current inventory of egg handler/dealers in the Department's inspection system by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Migrating a list from the DOR reporting system and ensuring quarterly updates are performed by an assigned staff member. ○ Ensuring the current list is posted in a location where inspection staff have ready access. ● Provide training to current inspection staff and their supervisors including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintenance of the listing of egg facilities in their assigned areas. ○ Familiarity with the laws and rules that apply to egg facilities in Washington. ○ Policy review for firm risk classification and egg inspection frequency. ○ Monitoring updated rules, policies and procedures related to egg production and egg packing plant inspections. <p>Completion Date: Corrective action is expected to be complete by December 2025</p> <p>Agency Contact: Evan Sheffels Senior Policy Advisor PO Box 42560 Olympia, WA 98504-2560 (360) 742-8157 ESheffels@agr.wa.gov</p>