



GAP Practices: Pick Your Own Operations: Customer Health and Hygiene

Customer health and hygiene for pick your own operations

- Toilet facilities and handwashing stations are clean and regularly serviced and maintained in good working order (soap, water and single-use paper towels) available for customer use
- Produce picked by customers is not accepted for sale
- There is the opportunity for customers to clean hands after coming in contact with farm animals (petting zoo) prior to entering "pick your own" area

Many fresh fruits and vegetables are eaten with little or no cooking--they are "ready to eat". Because they are not cooked, raw fruits and vegetables can be a source of disease-causing bacteria, viruses or parasites (pathogens). Foodborne disease outbreaks have been associated with raw tomatoes, carrots, sprouts, lettuce, cantaloupe and cabbage.

Humans and animals are the major source of pathogens in our food supply. *E.coli* 0157:H7, *Salmonella* spp., *Shigella* spp., *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Giardia lamblia*, *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *Hepatitis A* can often be traced back to human or animal sources.

It is as important for "pick-your-own" customers to observe good hygiene practices as it is for your own employees. While you can't make customers attend a training session, you can provide handwashing and toilet facilities to promote the practices that ensure the safety of the produce they pick. Use signs to encourage customers to wash their hands and to communicate your awareness of the food safety issues that concern the public. *Prevention practices and knowledge* are the key to the safety of the fruits and vegetables that you harvest.

What can you do?

- Provide your customers with convenient, well-maintained toilet facilities and toilet paper.
- Provide your customers with easily accessible, well-maintained handwashing facilities/stations, with paper towels, soap and a trash can.
- Post signs encouraging customers to wash their hands *before* picking produce and after using the toilet facilities. Signs are available through the internet, local health departments or universities.
- Be familiar with symptoms of illness and check to make sure that customers do not have open wounds or lesions.
- If you have an on-farm petting zoo or if customers can come in contact with animals, provide an opportunity for them to wash their hands after touching animals.

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