

**Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture  
Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services**

717-787-4315

[www.eatsafepa.com](http://www.eatsafepa.com)

**GUIDELINES FOR HONEY PROCESSORS IN PA**



*Reference materials in the public domain **define honey** as “a thick, sweet, syrupy substance that bees make as food from the nectar of flowers and store in honeycombs.” FDA has concluded that this definition accurately reflects the common usage of the term “honey.”*

The present document provides practicable guidelines\* for the sanitary production of Honey processing operations in compliance with the Food Safety Act (3 Pa. C.S.A. §§5721 - 5737). Producers of Honey will also be subject to federal rules within the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR’s) relating to food and good manufacturing practices.

All Honey producers in PA must register as a Food Establishment. The registration fee is \$35.00/year. Honey producers that are registered with a fee may legally place the statement “Reg. PA Dept of Agr.” on their product labels.

Exempt from registration fees, but not inspection, are “Food Establishments that are in compliance with the Honey Sale and Labeling Act **and** in which **100%** of the honey offered for human consumption is produced or processed **On-the-Farm** in which the food establishment is located”. Exempt honey processors may voluntarily register with a fee, if they desire to label their products as above.

Registration is not typically required for production of Honey which is designated for personal consumption and is given to close family or personal friends. Production of Honey to offer as gifts to neighbors and friends *may* be subject to registration if determined that the product is being advertised in any way (flyers, classified ad, word of mouth, etc.). Registration is legally required for any food processor, if food products enter commerce, whether they are provided with or without a fee.

Prior to issuing a registration and during the initial inspection, the Food Inspector will be looking for the following at your facility:

**Physical Structure of Facility:**

Floors, walls and ceilings shall be kept in good repair and adequately cleaned. Every practicable precaution shall be taken to exclude birds, insects, rodents and other vermin and animals from the premises of the operations.

The grounds outside the Honey production building shall be kept clean and free of unnecessary clutter or equipment that could harbor pests.

**Equipment and Utensils:**

Equipment and utensils shall be adequate for their intended use. Equipment shall be designed to prevent food contamination and shall be made of durable, non-porous and easily cleanable material. They shall be kept in a clean, sanitary condition at all times and shall be maintained in good repair and

free from rust so as not to pose a risk of product contamination.

Extractors and tanks shall be of non-corrosive finish, or shall be lacquered or painted with lacquers of paint of a type approved for food contact.

**Vector Control:**

Effective measures shall be taken to exclude pests of any kind from the processing, extraction or bottling areas. The use of insecticides, rodenticides and other pest control measures shall be permitted only under such precautions and restrictions as will prevent the contamination of the product, and as legally applied, under the PA Pesticide Control Act, by a certified Pest Control Operator, if applicable.

Tanks storing honey shall be covered so as to prevent any contamination from dust or rodents.

**Hygienic Practices:**

Toilet facilities shall be provided and conveniently located near the processing facility and shall be maintained in a sanitary fashion. All personnel shall wash hands after each visit to the toilet facility. Personnel shall not use tobacco in the facility or while in contact with food or equipment. Employees shall be free of communicable diseases and wear clean outer garments that will not contribute to the contamination of the product.

**Ventilation:**

All ventilating openings shall be screened or equipped with mechanical devices to exclude insects.

NOTE—It is understood that it is impossible to keep all bees out of an extracting facility, but they shall be kept to a minimum.

**Lighting:**

All facilities shall have sufficient light to permit efficient and effective operations. All lights located over exposed food, food areas used in any step of preparation, and in storage areas for food packaging containers shall be shatter-proof, shielded, or otherwise protected to prevent food adulteration in case of breakage.

**Water Supply:**

The water supply shall be ample for all operations (e.g. processing, cleaning, etc.) and shall be obtained from a potable public or private supply. Hot water shall be available for cleaning.

Private water supplies must be tested annually (approximately two weeks before the extraction season).

PDA water testing Protocol for Honey processors:

- *Initial testing for Coliform (1 sample) and Nitrate/Nitrite (1sample)*
- *Continual testing for Coliform - Annually*
- *Continual testing for Nitrate/Nitrite will be based on initial results.*

**Sanitation:**

An effective cleaning schedule shall be implemented at all times to maintain the integrity of the products. All utensils and product contact surfaces of equipment used in processing or handling the product shall be cleaned prior to use and following any interruption during which utensils and contact surfaces may have become contaminated.

Extractors and tanks shall be washed at the beginning and end of the extracting season. Extractors shall be covered when not in use.

**Waste Disposal:**

Waste shall be handled in such a manner as to not attract insects, rodents, birds, or other vermin; or create an environmental hazard.

**Extraction of Combs:**

Honey shall be extracted only from combs that are free from brood of the bees and/or larva of wax moths.

**Producers' returnable bulk containers:**

Before refilling all used bulk containers; the outside shall be cleaned but not necessarily the inside.

**Raw Honey:**

Honey for further processing shall be as clean as if run through an 18-mesh strainer.

**Vehicles:**

Vehicles used to transport supers shall be clean. Supers shall be so loaded and lidded to protect them from rain, dust, and other contaminants while in transit.

**Portable Extracting Plants:**

Portable extracting facilities and equipment shall meet all cleanliness requirements of stationary plants.

**Labeling:**

Honey must be in compliance with the Act of July 20, 1974, Honey Sale and Labeling Act.

Honey must additionally be labeled as required under the CFR's where all information on the label must be truthful and not misleading. Prepackaged Honey shall be labeled to show:

- a. *Statement of Identity – the common or usual name “honey” but if the food is a blend or a mixture of honey and another sweetener. Name must be sufficiently described on the label to distinguish it from simply “honey” (21 CFR 102.5(a)).*
- b. *Name and address of Manufacturer/distributor.*
- c. *Net Weight.*
- d. *Ingredients list if product made from two or more ingredients (e.g. sugar, flavor, etc.)*

\*This is NOT an all-inclusive list of requirements for a honey production site, but is intended to be a general guideline of food safety issues that must be addressed.

For more information, contact:

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**FDA Registration:**

The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) enacted on January 4, 2011, amended section 415 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act), in relevant part, to require that facilities engaged in manufacturing, processing, packing, or holding food for consumption in the United States register their facilities with FDA.

For more information contact FDA at 1-800-216-7331 or 301-575-0156 or visit their website at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FoodFacilityRegistration/default.htm>

**FSMA Preventive Controls Rule:**

Food Establishments engaging in Honey manufacturing/processing, packing, or holding activities that are ***small OR very small AND on-farm*** businesses may be exempt from the new FSMA Hazard Analysis & Risk-based Preventive Controls (HARPC) requirements because Honey processing operations are considered low-risk. Such firms still must comply with the current modernized Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMPs) 21 CFR 117 Subpart B.

All other Honey producers that do not meet the above criteria will likely need to comply with at least some portion of the Preventive Controls Rule.

Very small off-farm businesses may be eligible as “Qualified Facilities” for Preventive Controls Modified Requirements while Small off-farm businesses and large firms may be subject to the full requirements for establishing and implementing a *comprehensive Food Safety Risk-Based Preventive Controls Plan*.

For more information about FSMA, visit the FDA website at [www.fda.gov/fsma](http://www.fda.gov/fsma)

## REFERENCES

- [\*Proper Labeling of Honey & Honey Products Guidance for Industry \(pdf\)\*](#)
- [\*Act of July 20, 1974, Honey Sale and Labeling Act \(pdf\)\*](#)
- [\*PA Food Safety Act \(3 Pa. C.S.A. §§5721 - 5737\).\*](#)
- [\*FDA 21 CFR Part 110 – Current Good Manufacturing Practice \(cGMPs\)\*](#)
- [\*Click here to find the Code of Federal Regulations related to FSMA’s new Preventive Controls for Human Food Final Rule \(21 CFR 117-- cGMPs, Hazards Analysis, and Risk-Based Preventive Controls for Human Food\).\*](#)
- [\*FSMA Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule - PDA Fact Sheet\*](#)
- [\*www.EatSafePa.com\*](#)
- [\*http://extension.psu.edu/food/safety/food-safety-modernization-act\*](#)