

Egg Washing Protocol for Morning Owl Farm

1. Fill a sink or basin with 125 degree water. As the water is filling, add a drop of one of the natural, unscented dish washing liquids. We use Planet or Seventh Generation, whichever is on sale when we need it.
2. Add 12 eggs. Time yourself and see how fast you can clean a dozen eggs. The eggs won't turn into pumpkins at two minutes, but the longer the eggs are in water, the greater is the risk they'll absorb bacteria--bacteria it should be mentioned, that will be killed if the eggs are cooked correctly. Since you can never guarantee that, try not to sell eggs with bacteria by letting them sit in dirty water no more than two minutes. Take home lesson? Wash fast! Wash the eggs using either a rag or a scrubbie, one of those things with an abrasive pad on one side and a sponge on the other. This takes off all of the visible markings from the laying process.
3. We clean 60 eggs in a batch. When the 60th egg is clean, we draw a bath now of cold water and a little bit of chlorinated bleach--a very little bit. Get testing strips until you figure out how much bleach and water are needed to get to 100 ppm.
4. Set 10 eggs in the bath for 10-seconds. Set them on a drying rack or towel to dry.
5. Candle the eggs when dry to find blood spots and cracks. Blood spots are not uncommon when layers are starting to lay, but they're the exception not the rule. Still, if you're selling eggs, do your best to be sure they don't leave your farm; you want to give your eaters the best product you have!
6. Place eggs in clean cartons. We have re-used cartons that we know were taken care of, but if I'm not 100% sure, I use a new one. I never reuse cartons from small flock owners, for instance, because I'm not sure that they didn't put dirty eggs in the cartons. Cartons are cheap and you can reuse old cartons for things like "dog eggs" (eggs too big or too small to sell or eggs with slight cracks that can be boiled and fed to your dogs).
7. We save all of the shells from culled eggs and feed them back to the hens. Given a choice of oyster shell or their own egg shells, the hens will choose the shells for their source of calcium.

Our method isn't for everyone. The USDA doesn't like you to immerse eggs in water at all, but the USDA is regulating egg factories, not farmers like us who take precautions and who are using methods for our scale operation that have been used since farmers started collecting and selling eggs.