

BASIC REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSING HONEY PRODUCERS



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Commissioner

This document is intended to be a "Guideline" which describes in simple terms a number of basic requirements which must be met before licensing manufactured food firms. For further assistance, contact the Food Safety Division (404) 657-4801.

SMALL HONEY PRODUCER SELLING TO END-USER:

Georgia beekeepers are not required to obtain a Food Sales Establishment License if they process and retail their own honey on their own premises, on a door-to-door retail route, or at an established place of business owned and managed by the producer and the honey is sold directly to a household consumer as the end user (including fairs, festivals, & farmers markets).

Honey producers that fall into this category will be regulated by the Georgia Department of Agriculture but not required to obtain a Food Sales Establishment License. The honey must be processed in a sanitary environment focusing on food safety issues and follow labeling requirements.

LICENSING:

All other honey producers would be required to obtain a Food Sales Establishment License through the Georgia Department of Agriculture. This includes, but is not limited to: honey producers selling product for retail, wholesale, and bulk honey producers.

The Food Sales Establishment License may not be transferred from one person to another person, from one food establishment to another, or from one type of operation to another. The Department does not issue temporary permits.

FACILITIES:

Contact with the Administrative Office in Atlanta is strongly recommended prior to the beginning of any construction. Submission of plans or a site inspection will be conducted to confirm facility has been constructed & equipped adequately to comply with regulations.

Living or sleeping quarters located on the premises of a food establishment shall be separated from rooms and areas used for food establishment operations by complete partitioning and solid self-closing doors.

Seasonal operations that are not in production year round must not use the facility for any type of operation that would create a food safety condition or contamination when resuming the honey production. Equipment and facility shall be cleaned and sanitized before beginning the honey operation.

Receive approval from proper zoning authority for land use and comply with all other governing agencies.

Honey Producers must register their facilities with the FDA to carry out provisions of the Bioterrorism Act unless only selling retail to the end user. Registrants must complete FDA Form 3537 which can be found at: <http://www.access.fda.gov/>

Corporations must be registered with the Georgia Secretary of State with Active/Compliance status before receiving a Food Sales Establishment license.

FACILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Exterior walls, doors, floors and roof of processing area shall effectively protect the establishment from the weather and the entry of insects, rodents and other animals. Exterior walking and driving surfaces shall be graded to drain.

Materials for indoor floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces under conditions of normal use shall be smooth, durable and easily cleanable for areas where processing operations are conducted.

Floor coverings shall be designed to be easily cleanable. Wall and ceiling covering materials shall be attached so that they are easily cleanable.

Studs, joists, and rafters may not be exposed in areas subject to moisture, flushing, or spray cleaning methods.

Attachments to walls and ceilings such as light fixtures, mechanical room ventilation system components, vent covers, wall mounted fans, decorative items, and other attachments shall be easily cleanable.

Light bulbs shall be shielded, coated, or otherwise shatter-resistant in areas where there is exposed food; clean equipment, utensils, and linens; or unwrapped single-service and single-use articles.

PEST CONTROL:

Adequate measures shall be in place to preclude contamination by insects, rodents, and other pests: within the area/physical facility and its' contents; and on the contiguous land or property.

This includes maintaining the premises by eliminating harborage conditions such as; excessive vegetative growth, litter and unnecessary items to the operation.

If windows or doors are kept open for ventilation or other purposes, the openings shall be protected against the entry of insects and rodents by using; 16 mesh to 1 inch screens, properly designed & installed air curtains, or other effective means.

SINKS:

Sink requirement determined by the type of equipment used in processing operation.

Due to the nature of honey, the placement of the sinks should be conveniently located in the facility for use but not in an area that would create possible contamination to the honey.

WAREWASHING:

Honey processing facilities utilizing only clean in place (CIP) equipment shall be able to effectively wash, rinse, and sanitize equipment using sanitary methods.

Honey processing facilities utilizing equipment that should be disassembled and/or utensils require a 2-compartment sink allowing for adequate wash, rinse, and sanitize procedure. Sink compartments shall be large enough to accommodate immersion of the largest equipment and utensils.

HANDWASHING:

Handwashing facilities shall provide hot and cold running water under pressure and be accessible to employees at all times.

RESTROOMS:

Restroom shall be conveniently located and equipped with at least 1 handwash sink located in or immediately adjacent to the restroom.

WATER:

Water from public or private water systems shall meet quality standards set forth by Georgia Department of Natural

Resources regulation 391-3-5 Rules for Safe Drinking Water.

Water from a non-public water system shall be sampled at least annually and tested as required by the Department.

The water source and system shall be of sufficient capacity and pressure to meet the water demands of food establishments.

Hot water generation and distribution systems shall be sufficient to meet the peak hot water demands.

PLUMBING:

A plumbing system shall be designed, constructed and installed according to local code.

A plumbing system and hoses conveying water shall be constructed and repaired with approved materials.

Backflow prevention device or air gap required between the water supply inlet and the flood level rim of the plumbing fixture.

Recommend use of a filter to collect wax before it goes down the drain at floor and sink locations.

SEWAGE:

Sewage shall be disposed through an approved public or individual disposal system.

County or municipal sewer system evaluation may be required to approve a grease trap, or to allow an exemption.

FOOD:

Honey shall be of sound condition and safe for human consumption and shall be obtained from sources that comply with applicable laws relating to food safety.

Records shall be kept on honey received from another source for traceability purposes.

TESTING:

Retail honey producers are exempt from the testing requirements for Manufactured Food facilities subject to 40-7-18-.06.

Unless exempted from the testing requirements according to 40-7-18-.10(f), a food processing plant is required to conduct testing of finished products leaving the food processing facility, including finished product ingredients going to other facilities for use in other products, for the presence of poisonous or deleterious substances or other contaminants rendering such foods or ingredients injurious to health. Testing shall be conducted according to the risk category of the food processing plant.

An optional Written Food Safety Plan may be submitted to reduce or possibly in lieu of the testing requirements stated in 40-7-18-.06 (see 40-7-18-.09 for additional information on Written Food Safety Plans). The Department will accept, deny, or request modifications to the plan. Civil penalties are imposed if testing requirements are not followed.

REPORTING:

Retail honey producers are exempt from the reporting requirements for Manufactured Food facilities subject to 40-7-18-.07.

Whenever any person or firm operating a food processing plant in this state obtains information from testing of samples or specimens of finished foods or finished food ingredients which indicates the presence of a substance that would cause a manufactured food to be adulterated with the presence of poisonous or deleterious substances or other contaminants, such person or firm shall report such test result(s) to the Department within 24 hours after obtaining such results. This includes reporting the presence of poisonous or deleterious substances or other contaminants even if the product was not distributed and the problem was corrected.

The owner or company representative will report the results by e-mail to the Georgia Department of Agriculture positiveresults@agr.georgia.gov. Civil penalties are imposed if reporting requirements are not followed.

HAIR RESTRAINTS:

Food employees shall wear hair restraints during honey production; such as hats, hair coverings, nets, beard restraints and clothing that covers body hair; to prevent contamination.

EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS:

Materials used for utensils and food-contact surfaces of equipment may not allow the migration of deleterious substances or impart colors, odors, or tastes to food and under normal conditions shall be: safe, durable, smooth & easily cleanable.

ADULTERATION:

Product claimed to be pure honey that has been mixed with sugar syrups, corn syrups, syrups of natural origin are considered adulterated products.

HONEY CONTAINERS:

Reused empty containers intended for cleaning and refilling with honey shall be cleaned and refilled in a regulated food processing plant.

Empty and/or filled honey containers shall be stored in a clean/dry location where they are not exposed to splash, dust or other contamination and properly labeled.

LABELS:

All packed product labels should meet the FDA labeling requirements found in 16 C.F.R. Part 500.

Basic label requirement for honey (consumer size containers & bulk):

1. The name and address including the city, state, and zip code of the manufacturer, packer or distributor.
2. The Net Contents:
 - a. Honey is expressed in terms of weight
 - b. Both metric (grams, kilograms) and U.S. Customary System (ounces, pounds) terms must be on label.
 - c. The declaration of contents of a package must be listed on the label and shall appear on the bottom 30% of the principal display panel.
3. State the common name – Honey, Raw Honey, variety of honey. This must be an accurate description of the honey.
4. A product code shall be applied to all packaged foods by the food manufacturer or processor at the time of packaging, which indicates information that would be useful in tracing the product back to the production date, location, and like information.

INSPECTION:

Georgia Department of Agriculture's Compliance Specialists shall have access during all hours of operation and at all other hours.

Inspections shall be conducted as often as the Department deems necessary to insure compliance with these regulations and at a minimum established by Departmental directives.

Georgia Department of Agriculture and U.S. Food and Drug Administration routinely pull samples to check for pesticides and antibiotics. Honey producers shall follow label recommendations on approved treatments for various pest and diseases.

FOOD SAFETY DIVISION – RULES AND REGULATIONS:

Retail honey producers requiring a license from the Department are subject to the **Food Safety General Rules – Chapter 40-7-1**. These regulations can be found on the Retail Food Section's webpage:

<http://agr.georgia.gov/retail.aspx> *See the Regulations & Documents block.*

Honey producers that wholesale or distribute are subject to **Additional Regulations Applicable to Processing Plants – Chapter 40-7-18**. These regulations can be found on the Manufactured Food Section's webpage:

<http://agr.georgia.gov/manufactured-foods.aspx> *See the Regulations & Documents block.*