

HEMP PROGRAM -Reducing Risk in Hemp Production

Vermont hemp producers know that making high quality products is one of the ways that Vermont can compete in the national market. Quality products are not based on test results, alone. Testing is a regulatory requirement under the Vermont Hemp Rules but producing high quality hemp products starts with good cultivation practices in the field, greenhouse or indoors and continues through harvest, storage, and manufacturing. This FAQ discusses common risk reduction strategies that apply to other agricultural products, which can minimize the potential for contamination with human pathogens during production and harvest, including how to identify sources and prevent potential contamination, as well as suggested employee health and hygiene measures on the farm. While not regulatory for hemp growers and processors, the industry can learn how to prevent contamination from these existing regulatory frameworks.

Frequently Asked Questions

Health & Hygiene

How can producers increase employee awareness of health and hygiene?

There are three primary ways to ensure health and hygiene on the farm. All workers and supervisors should be trained to recognize symptoms of illness and should never work when sick. Supervisors should also know when to exclude workers from activities that could result in transmission of human pathogens. Cuts or skin abrasions should be cleaned and covered before handling hemp crops or coming into surfaces that would also come into contact with hemp crops.

Workers should wash their hands. Washing hands is one of the best ways to reduce transmission of human pathogens, before beginning work, after all breaks including smoking and restroom breaks, and after touching any animals. These practices apply to visitors to a hemp farm, too.

All employees must have access to sanitation facilities including toilets and handwashing stations supplied with soap, a clean water supply, paper towels, and a trash receptacle.

As an additional measure, producers should discuss health and hygiene with new employees and annually with all workers addressing hand washing, recognizing when it is unsafe to work, and general hygienic practices.

UVM Extension hand washing stations PDF: blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/files/2020/06/UVM-Ext-Touchless-Handwashing-Stations-Fact-Sheet-v1.1-FINAL.pdf

When to wash hands: agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/AgencyImages/Produce_Program/WhenToWashHands.pdf

Domestic & Wild Animals

How can producers mitigate contamination from wild animals?

Contamination or damage by wild animals may include visible animal excreta or eaten or partially eaten hemp plants. Workers should be trained to identify and not harvest plants that appear contaminated or damaged.

To prevent wildlife/rodent contamination in facilities, inspect and monitor the interior and exterior of buildings for rodent and bird

activity. Any hemp, hemp packing or storage material that becomes contaminated or infested should be discarded.

What can hemp producers do to manage domestic animals on the farm?

Pets, such as dogs, and working animals should be excluded from hemp fields, especially during harvest time. Pets should also be excluded from any hemp drying, storage and processing facilities.

Wildlife and rodent guidance:

www.agriculture.vermont.gov/produce-program/produce-safety-bite-animals

Domestic animals fact sheet:

www.agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/documents/Produce_Program/VAAF%20Domesticated%20Animal%20Factsheet.pdf

Cultivation and Harvest Practices

Why should a producer be concerned about reducing risks in production and harvesting practices?

Reducing risk means identifying conditions that are reasonably likely to introduce known or reasonably foreseeable hazards into the production system. A hemp producer can take precautions to reduce risk of microbial contamination by ensuring water that is intended to or likely to come into contact with hemp floral material, edible hemp greens, or sprouts should be safe and adequately sanitary for its intended use including water used for irrigation and foliar sprays and to clean surfaces that will come into contact with hemp crops and flower.

Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices,
www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp

Water Quality Testing,
www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/d

[documents/2016/12/PHL_agricultural_water_source_guidelines.pdf](http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016/12/PHL_agricultural_water_source_guidelines.pdf)

Animal-based soil amendments should be adequately processed before application. Adequately processed includes physical, chemical, or biological processing to kill any human pathogens. A hemp producer could also reduce risk by incorporating the soil amendment in such a way as to prevent contact with the harvestable hemp material either during application or at harvest.

Hemp floral material or leafy greens should not be harvested if dropped on the ground during harvest or packing. Cleaning off the material or visually inspecting it may not be enough to assess whether it is safe or could be a source of contamination impacting the quality of a harvest lot.

This may be less of a concern when hemp material will be extracted into a concentrate at a processing location.

The Produce Safety Rule,
www.agriculture.vermont.gov/produceprogram/produce-safety-resources

Testing

If a producer employs these recommended practices to limit introduction of contaminants, is testing still required?

Yes, the Vermont Hemp Rules require testing for contaminants by a certified laboratory regardless of using preventative measures in production and at harvest.

Cannabis Quality Control Program:

www.agriculture.vermont.gov/public-health-agricultural-resource-management-division/hemp-program/hemp-potency-and-contaminant