



UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS

So you've been visited unexpectedly by an OEFFA inspector—or perhaps you have questions about unannounced organic inspections. What are unannounced inspections and what do they mean for YOU?

BACKGROUND

The National Organic Program (NOP) requires that certifiers conduct unannounced inspections at a minimum of 5% of the operations they certify every year. This extra scrutiny helps certifiers like OEFFA verify compliance with the NOP standards and strengthens the integrity of the organic label. All certified organic operations are subject to unannounced inspections according to NOP 205.403(b)(2).

WHAT IS AN UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION?

An unannounced inspection occurs when an inspector examines the production or handling activities of a certified operation to verify compliance with the organic standards without advanced notice. In some instances, up to four hours' notice may be given before an unannounced inspection.

The range of information verified at an unannounced inspection can vary widely. An unannounced inspection could be a partial or spot inspection, focused on a few areas that represent potential risk. Often, an unannounced inspection is combined with sample collection to test for residues of prohibited substances or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In certain circumstances, an unannounced inspection may be a complete inspection of an operation, possibly serving as the required annual inspection.

OEFFA strives to conduct all unannounced inspections while an authorized representative listed in the Organic System Plan is present. However, we may occasionally choose to proceed with an unannounced inspection with someone other than the authorized representative, such as a family member or employee. We may also make observations from the road if no one is at home. We will never ask an inspector to trespass and tour the

land or facilities when no one is around.

After an unannounced inspection, the inspector will write a report describing what they observed at the operation. OEFFA will review the report and the results of any sample testing and will send a letter to the operator with the results.

HOW DOES OEFFA SELECT OPERATIONS FOR UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS?

We take care to cover our entire certification service area evenly over time. To achieve this, we select some operations for unannounced inspections randomly.

Many operations are selected for unannounced inspection based on a perception of risk to organic integrity. Complex operations, operations with both organic and conventional activity, and operations with a history of compliance issues are considered higher risk. A tip from a neighbor, an inspector, or a reviewer may also indicate a higher risk. If questions remain that could not be answered at the regular annual inspection, we may follow up with an unannounced inspection.

All certified organic operations must undergo a full inspection at least once per calendar year. If the inspection season is ending and we have been unable to schedule an annual inspection, we may choose to do the annual inspection as an unannounced inspection.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I REFUSE AN UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION?

Permitting inspections is a requirement for organic certification, and refusal of any organic inspection will likely result in a noncompliance with NOP 205.400(c).



OEFFA Certification

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