

# Prepare vegetables for freezing

**YORK** — Choose vegetables suitable for freezing and the best varieties for freezing.

Vegetables should be harvested at their peak of maturity and prepared for freezing immediately, says A. Joan Lamberson, Extension home economist. Enzymatic changes continue after harvest, lowering the quality and nutritive value. If you can't freeze the vegetables immediately after harvest, refrigerate them for only short periods of time.

When preparing vegetables, wash a small quantity of the vegetables gently in several changes of cold water. Lift the vegetables out of the water each time so all dirt will settle to the bottom of the sink or pan.

Shell, husk or peel and trim. Some vegetables such as lima beans, corn-on-the-cob and asparagus require sorting for size since blanching times depend on the size of the pieces.

Blanch vegetables to stop enzymatic action and reduce deterioration in color, flavor and texture. This is not necessary for green peppers and mature onions. Most vegetables are blanched by heating them in boiling water for the time specified in modern freezing directions.

A blancher, consisting of a tall kettle, basket and cover, is convenient to use and can be bought at

most department or farm supply stores. However, any large pan, which can be fitted with a wire or perforated metal basket and cover, is suitable.

To ensure adequate blanching, immerse a basket containing a small amount of the vegetable (about one pound) into a large amount of water (at least one

gallon). Start timing once the vegetable has been immersed and the kettle is covered. Blanching time will vary with the vegetable and the size of the pieces, so follow the recommended blanching times for each vegetable.

Steam blanching vegetables will perform the same functions as water blanching and helps

vegetables retain even better color, texture and nutrients. However, steam blanching consumes more energy and thereby increases costs.

Cool steam or water blanched vegetables by immersing them in a large quantity of cold or ice water. Rapid cooling is necessary to stop

the food from cooking. Cool the vegetable for about the same length of time as it was heated. Once cooled, do not leave the vegetable standing in water, as loss of flavor and food value can occur. Drain the cooled vegetable thoroughly before packaging. A large colander is a useful tool for draining.

# Protect horses from sleeping sickness

**SHAWNEE, Ks.** — The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends all horses be vaccinated annually against Equine Encephalomyelitis (Sleeping Sickness).

This recommendation is emphasized by Dr. Ralph Knowles at USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. He points out the recommendation includes vaccination against both Eastern and Western strains of the disease.

Although there is a trend toward routine annual vaccination, authorities say a reasonable estimate is that only 20 to 25 percent of the total U.S. horse population now receives this protection.

Dr. Knowles' advice to horse owners is wholeheartedly endorsed by Dr. Thomas E. Walton at USDA's Arthropod-Borne Animal Diseases Research Laboratory in

Denver. Both call Equine Encephalomyelitis "an ever-present threat".

The probability of incidence of this disease in horses increases significantly where a large proportion of an area's horse population is not vaccinated against it. And, biting insects can carry the disease to humans.

Under the proper conditions, every horse, regardless of breed, age or sex, is susceptible. The ideal time for vaccinating is before the local mosquito season begins.

A key vector or carrier in the transmission cycle is the mosquito. Birds are the reservoir hosts. They introduce Equine Encephalomyelitis into an area via mosquitoes parasitic to birds. Then other mosquitoes transmit Sleeping Sickness from birds to horses or humans.

The build up and concentration of infected birds, combined with large numbers of mosquitoes, intensifies into explosive Encephalomyelitis incidence. Horses

and humans are dead-end hosts.

Mosquitoes can thrive even in a dry climate if they can find standing water to breed in. In the Western U.S., for example, irrigation canals and reservoirs provide a perfect base for mosquito propagation.

Once infected with Equine Encephalomyelitis, the horse exhibits various symptoms including fever, extreme nervousness, loss of appetite, depression and paralysis. Of the three principal strains of Sleeping Sickness — Eastern, Western and Venezuelan — the Eastern is most severe because it usually results in death in 90 percent of the cases. The Western form may leave horses brain-damaged after a prolonged course of illness, treatment and apparent recovery. The Venezuelan strain causes explosive outbreaks with high equine mortality. It does not exist in the U.S. at present.

Sleeping Sickness is a disease that affects the horse's brain and spinal cord. No antiviral treatment is available, and permanent damage may result if the horse survives. The only means of preventing Equine Encephalomyelitis is by vaccination. After the initial immunization, only an annual booster is needed.

Combination vaccines now available also allow the horse to receive protection against other major dangers at the same time it is vaccinated against Equine Encephalomyelitis. Tetanus Toxoid and Equine Influenza immunity are also available in combination with the Encephalomyelitis vaccine. Tetanus is one of the most

common and most serious horse health problems, with a death rate estimated at 85 percent. The spores of this organism are found everywhere in the soil, only waiting for an opportunity to enter the horse's system through a scratch or other break in foot or hide.

A third disease that is not normally fatal, but harmful and preventable, is Equine Influenza. It is a highly contagious disease of the respiratory tract that causes coughing and nasal discharge. Usually three to six weeks are needed for full recovery. Occasionally a horse weakened by influenza is attacked by other diseases that can result in permanent lung damage or even death.

For more information on the prevention of Equine Encephalomyelitis and tetanus, horse owners should consult their veterinarians.



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