

Store foods properly and promptly

NEWARK, Del. — Make sure the foods you buy remain safe and wholesome from the market to the table. Keep perishable foods refrigerated so illness-causing bacteria can't multiply.

When you shop for groceries, get your perishables home as quickly as possible, advises University of Delaware extension home economist Sally Foulke. Avoid running errands on your way home from the store. If perishable foods are left unrefrigerated for too long, frozen foods can defrost, produce can wilt, and meat and dairy products can spoil.

Cars with hatchbacks or large windows quickly become hothouses on sunny days. Protect your groceries by carrying an inexpensive styrofoam cooler with an ice pack. Slip frozen foods, meats and dairy products into the cooler when you leave the store.

At home, don't leave bags of groceries sitting on the counter. Wrap foods properly and store them promptly. Worry about the perishables first: frozen foods, meats, dairy products and fresh produce.

To store meat and poultry in the refrigerator, remove the original wrapping and rewrap loosely in plastic wrap or foil. For freezer storage, use a moisture-vaporproof wrap.

Refrigerated and frozen foods will retain their high quality and remain safe to eat longer if kept sufficiently cold. So Foulke says it's wise to check refrigerator and freezer temperatures occasionally. Hardware stores carry thermometers just for this purpose. The refrigerator should maintain a temperature of 38-40 degrees F, and the freezer, 0 degrees F or lower.

Even when foods are properly wrapped and promptly refrigerated or frozen, bacteria still grow. Cold storage only delays the growth. In time, even under

optimum storage conditions, food begins to deteriorate. If you have questions about how long a food product can safely be refrigerated or frozen, consult a reliable food

storage chart or call the county extension office.

Canned, packaged and other shelf-stable grocery products should be arranged in your pantry or cupboard so that the oldest will be used first. Keep cupboards and the food stored in them dry and clean. Otherwise, dust could fall into a can or package when it is

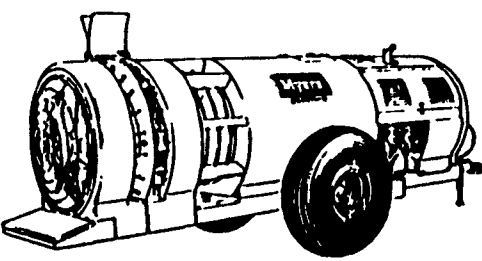
opened. Never store food, even sealed cans, under the kitchen sink, Foulke warns. Pipes can leak, and food can attract insects and rodents.

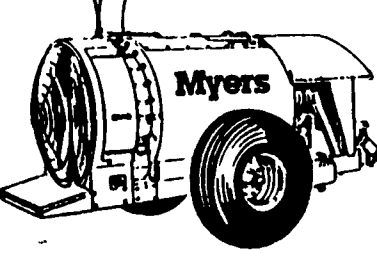
If canned goods show signs of leaking or bulging, discard them. Food from such cans should not be prepared, tasted or fed to animals.

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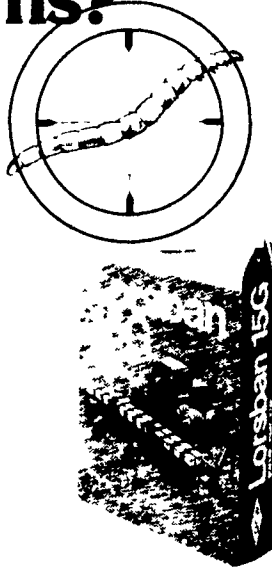
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