



Q: Help! My basement recently flooded with rain and melting snow. Some canned foods and home-canned tomatoes were under water. The jars are still sealed, but I'm wondering if I can still use them.

A: Floodwaters may contain sewage and bacteria that can contaminate food, making it unsafe to eat. The US Department of Agriculture recommends throwing out all food that may have come into contact with flood waters. This includes food in open or never-opened packages or containers. Discard store-bought canned goods, home-canned foods, glass food or beverage containers (including jars with waxed cardboard seals such as mayonnaise and salad dressing); all foods in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, cellophane or cloth; spices, seasonings and extracts, flour, sugar, grain, coffee and other staples in canisters; meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, or cheese, and fresh produce.

Canned foods that didn't come into contact with flood waters are safe if properly sanitized. Mark contents on can lid with indelible marker, remove label, wash with hot soapy water, rinse, submerge in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of room-temperature water for 15 minutes, and air dry. Remember: *When in doubt, throw it out!*

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. & W 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu