

Testing for the Extended Shelf Life of Large Containers

This guidance is intended for a facility seeking approval for extended shelf life (any sell-by/best-by greater than 17 days) on large containers, such as bag in the box or large totes.

- A large container is defined as any container that is larger than one (1) gallon.
- The facility may maintain possession of the large container(s) for the duration of the proposed shelf life.
- The large container(s) must remain closed/sealed for the duration of the proposed shelf life and be maintained at a temperature between 34 and 45°F.
- Once the proposed shelf life has been reached from the date of production, an approved sampler may pull a subsample from the large container. A temperature control (TC) sample must accompany the subsample.
- The subsample must be no less than 30mL.
- The TC & subsample must be received by PA-Approved Milk Laboratory no more than 48 hours from the time of sampling.
- The subsample must be tested for bacterial count (Standard Plate Count, Coliform Count, and all supporting tests to make the sample results official) at a PA-Approved Laboratory.
- The larger container size(s) must be tested for each product type for which you are applying for the extended shelf life in that container size(s).
- Three (3) separate production runs must be tested to be accepted for the requested container size(s).
- All testing must be completed within the three (3) months prior to application of extended shelf life.
- Test results must include: the date of production, the date of subsampling, date the subsample was received by the lab, temperature of the product at sampling, temperature of the subsample once it is received by the lab, all the required testing results, and the signature of the lab director.
- The application and testing data and results must be submitted on the current department's "Application for Sell By or Best By Dates Greater than 17 Days." [Application for Sell by or Best by Dates Greater Than 17 Days rev 2-22.pdf \(pa.gov\)](#)
- If the large container size(s) are used for the highest selling by volume milk product, then the larger container size(s) must be part of the continued periodic monitoring tests.