

## Produce Inspection Guidelines

Please read this now to ensure your certification remains in good standing. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in an invalid inspection. As always, if you are unsure about the validity of an inspection, please contact [forms@naturallygrown.org](mailto:forms@naturallygrown.org)

- **Take the Initiative** You are responsible for making the arrangements to have your farm inspected - no one else will set them up for you. However, if you need assistance finding an inspector or finding out if an inspector is valid, we are here to help. Please contact [forms@naturallygrown.org](mailto:forms@naturallygrown.org)
- **Annual Requirement** Inspections shall be conducted annually (with a four month grace period) ideally by different qualified inspectors each year. If your farm is Certified Organic, you may send a copy of your organic certificate in place of a CNG report. You may be de-listed from the CNG program if you do not arrange an inspection for your own farm in a timely manner.
- **No Trading** To avoid a conflict of interest, there is no trading inspections within two consecutive years. If Farmer A inspects Farmer B's farm, then Farmer B should not inspect Farmer A's farm until
  - At least 24 months have passed, and
  - Farmer A has been inspected by someone other than Farmer B..
- **No Repeats** You may not repeatedly rely on the same inspector when there are other CNG farmers nearby. Doing so risks compromising the integrity of the program and fails to provide you diverse perspectives and feedback. When there are no other inspectors available, a repeat inspector may be used so long as an [observer](#) is included. The Observer cannot be an employee, intern, or family member of either you or the inspector.
- **Variances** to the No Trading and No Repeats rules may be granted in special cases, but they must first be approved by CNG staff, and an [observer](#) must be included. The Observer cannot be an employee, intern, or family member of either the farmer you or the inspector.
- **Work Requirement** Every CNG producer must *conduct* at least one inspection of another CNG operation (of a similar type) annually. You may be de-listed from the CNG program if you do not *fulfill this requirement*. This requirement is waived if there is not another CNG producer within an hour's drive of you and you are unable to conduct a remote inspection due to a lack of internet, or lack of the experience required to fulfill this role.
- Inspections by family members, employees, and interns are not considered valid.

### Types of Inspectors

- **CNG Producers:** When possible, have your inspection done by another CNG producer in your area who is familiar with your type of production (so a beekeeper shouldn't inspect a livestock producer, unless they also have experience with livestock). Use our [map](#) to find CNG producers in your area, or call us if you do not have access to the internet.
- **Remote Inspection (conducted by a CNG producer):** Please review our [Remote Inspection Policy](#) to determine if you are eligible for this option. If you proceed with this option, be sure both the farmer and inspector adhere to our [Remote Inspection Checklists](#).
- **Other Producers using Natural Practices:** As an alternative, you may rely on a non-CNG farmer using natural practices. Consider contacting a certified organic farmer, or a non-certified producer using natural methods who is familiar with your type of production. The inspector must be a farmer producing for market, *not a gardener*.
- **Extension Agents & SWCD Agents:** In many areas, extension agents have been pleased to conduct inspections, but attitudes vary. The response you get may depend on how big-ag friendly your extension agency is.
- **Educators:** Someone who teaches courses on natural farming practices may conduct your inspection, so long as they can indicate an institutional affiliation.
- **Customers (3 or more):** This option is only to be used by members who have had at least two inspections conducted by one of the options listed above. Pick a time and date in the season when things are interesting and active (and you'll be able to spare a couple hours). Make the inspection an open house for your customers, and be sure at least three of them are prepared to follow the inspection worksheets and complete the report. *The inspection forms are designed to walk people who don't know a lot about farming through a meaningful inspection process.*

### Tips for Success

- Use our [map](#) to find CNG members near you.
- Introduce yourself! If you send an email, be sure to explain where you are located, and what times might work best for you.
- Use the phone! Email is fine for initial outreach, but a follow-up phone call often gets much better results.
- Follow-up! If your inspector made vague plans to come by, but never did, go ahead and give them a call. A friendly reminder is usually all that's needed to get the job done. If necessary, find someone else to inspect.