

FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

FOOD STORAGE FIELD CARD

Cool, dry, dark, sealed, rotated. Temperature sets the clock and fat shortens it.

SET THE CONDITIONS FIRST

- ☐ **Target a constant 40–60°F for dry staples**
USU Extension. FoodSafety.gov says 40–70°F generally; FSIS says below 85°F for cans
- ☐ **Every 10.8°F rise halves shelf life**
USU Extension, citing USDA. Steady beats warm-and-cool cycling
- ☐ **Put a thermometer on the shelf for a week**
Read the high and the low, not the average
- ☐ **Keep containers off the concrete**
Concrete wicks moisture and encourages rust. A pallet fixes it
- ☐ **Dark and opaque**
Light degrades vitamins A, D, E, fats and proteins. USU: still safe to eat, just unappealing

REALISTIC SHELF LIFE

White rice	25–30 yr sealed oxygen-free and cool; ~10 yr at 70°F WITH absorbers
Brown rice	~6 months at 70°F. Bran oil goes rancid
Dry beans	10+ yr in #10 cans or foil pouches, oxygen removed
Wheat	Best at 40–60°F. Above 60°F mostly costs sprouting ability
Dry milk	3–5 yr cool; as little as 3 months hot. NON-FAT only (whole milk powder is not a storage item)
Rolled oats	Up to 30 yr. BYU: little change at 28 yr in #10 cans
Canned	High-acid 12–18 mo; low-acid 2–5 yr (FSIS quality windows)

Fat is the clock. Dried whole milk and dried buttermilk contain milk fat and are not suitable for long-term storage (USU). Same reason brown rice loses to white rice. Store the plain, dry, low-fat version.

HOW MUCH, AT MINIMUM

- ☐ **1 gallon water per person per day**
Ready.gov. Needs can double in very hot weather. Never ration unless told to
- ☐ **3-day supply of food and water per person and pet**
FoodSafety.gov. Ready.gov says "several days" without a number
- ☐ **Replace self-bottled stored water every 6 months**
Ready.gov. This is a WATER rule. It does not apply to food

SEALING — THE SAFETY RULE

Dry only. USU Extension warning: botulism poisoning can occur if moist products are stored in packaging that reduces oxygen. With oxygen absorbers, products must be dry, about 10% moisture or less. The hazard is MOISTURE, not fat.

- ☐ **Foil pouch inside a bucket**
Pouch is the gas barrier; bucket is the armor. Rodents chew through foil alone
- ☐ **Vacuum sealing is not preservation**
USU: it increases botulism bacteria's ability to grow by removing oxygen. Refrigerated stays refrigerated
- ☐ **Absorbers are not always needed**
USU: unnecessary for wheat unless insects present; not required and not recommended for sugar and honey
- ☐ **Bay leaves, nails, salt: no effect**
USU lists these as not recommended against insects or eggs

DRY ICE, IN ORDER (USU, WHEAT)

- ☐ **1. Three to four inches of grain in the bucket**
- ☐ **2. Gloves on, add 2–3 oz crushed dry ice**
- ☐ **3. Fill the bucket the rest of the way**
- ☐ **4. Lid on top SLIGHTLY ASKEW**
The step people skip. CO₂ has to push the air out
- ☐ **5. After 30 minutes, seal air-tight**

INSPECT A CAN (FSIS)

- ☐ **Small dent, otherwise good = safe to eat**
- ☐ **Deep dent = one you can lay a finger into. Discard**
- ☐ **Sharp dent on top or side SEAM = discard**
A damaged seam lets bacteria in
- ☐ **Surface rust that rubs off = keep it**
- ☐ **Bulging, leaking, spurting, foaming, off-smell = throw out**
CDC: you cannot see, smell, or taste botulism toxin. No sniff test

DATES & ROTATION

- ☐ **Dates are quality, not safety**
FSIS: except infant formula, dates are not a safety indicator and not required by federal law
- ☐ **Infant formula Use-By is the real exception**
FDA-regulated. Ensures the labeled nutrient content
- ☐ **Write month + year on every lid in marker**
- ☐ **FIFO: oldest to the front, every restock**
FSIS: check the pantry every few weeks

OUTAGE & FLOOD

- ☐ **Fridge ~4 hr • full freezer ~48 hr • half-full ~24 hr**
Door closed. Discard perishables above 40°F for 2 hr, or 1 hr if above 90°F
- ☐ **Ice crystals or 40°F or below = safe to refreeze or cook**
- ☐ **Anything touched by floodwater goes out**
Includes screw-caps, snap-lids, twist and flip tops, cardboard cartons, and ALL home-canned food
- ☐ **Salvage cans: label off → wipe → hot soapy wash → rinse → sanitize → re-label → use soon**
Sanitize = 1 cup unscented bleach per 5 gal water, 15 min, or boil 2 min

Full guide: tacticalbox.com/blogs/tacticalbox-blog/how-to-store-emergency-food-long-term

Sources: USU Extension food storage research and Food Storage booklet; USDA FSIS shelf-stable food and food product dating; FoodSafety.gov; CDC home-canned foods; Ready.gov.