



Frequently Asked Questions

Milk Containers Join Deposit System - June 1, 2009

(Updated May 1, 2009)

Introduction into Deposit System

1. When will the deposit on milk containers be implemented?

The deposit on milk containers comes into effect on June 1, 2009. As of that date, a refundable deposit will be paid by consumers on purchases of milk and cream in ready-to-serve containers. These containers can then be returned to a bottle depot for a refund of the deposit.

Some retailers will likely receive, display and therefore sell quantities of the newly marked milk containers prior to June 1, 2009. In this case, these containers may be sold with the new deposit amount applied, but these containers will not be eligible for the refund until after June 1, 2009. Similarly, newly marked milk containers sold prior to June 1, 2009 that might be returned to a bottle depot prior to June 1 will not be eligible for a refund.

The new markings on milk containers will include "AB DEPOSIT" printed in either red or black ink below the neck of a plastic milk container and either under the gable or on the top ridge of a gable top.

2. What sizes and types of milk and/or cream containers are included in the deposit program on June 1, 2009? Ready-to-serve containers in excess of 30mL of fluid milk, creams, whipping creams, buttermilk and drinkable yogurt will be included in the deposit for milk that takes effect on June 1, 2009.

3. Why is cream being included in this program?

Cream containers were previously included in the voluntary program, and so for consistency purposes to consumers, these same products and containers will be carried over into the deposit/refund program.

4. What, if anything, is not included in this program?

Infant formula, non-dairy based flavoured coffee creamers and non-drinkable semi-fluids (ie. yogurt sold in tubes and pop packs) are not included because these products are not ready-to-serve beverages.

5. What is the deposit amount on milk containers?

The deposit on milk containers, established through regulation, will be the

same as the deposit on similar sized containers which are already part of the deposit program – 10¢ for containers 1 litre and under, and 25¢ for milk containers over 1 litre.

6. Will the deposit be charged on all milk sales (e.g., coffee shops, sporting events) or just on sales through grocery stores?

As long as it's sold in a ready-to-serve container, milk purchased in any retail establishment will be subject to deposits and applicable recycling fees. In the case of food service establishments such as coffee shops, the deposit may be included in the price of the beverage.

7. Putting a deposit and Container Recycling Fee (CRF) on milk will increase my cost. Will it have a negative impact on low income families who rely on milk as a nutritious staple?

While the cost of milk will likely increase at the till, consumers will have the choice to return their empty containers to receive a refund of their deposit by returning the empty containers to the bottle depot. (the CRF is non-refundable).

8. Aren't these changes just a way for government to make money (Is this a tax increase from the government)?

No, the Government of Alberta does not receive any funds collected on beverage containers. The funds are managed by a not-for-profit company which operates the recycling deposit/refund system in a transparent manner. The deposit refund system has been in place for over 36 years in Alberta. This approach is consistent with Alberta's waste management strategy to encourage Albertans to take responsibility for resource conservation and waste minimization.

Recycling Unmarked Containers

9. Can I start saving my milk containers now and take them to a bottle depot on June 1, 2009 for a refund?

No. Starting on June 1, milk and cream containers will be marked so that only those that have had a deposit paid by consumers will be eligible for a refund at the bottle depot.

10. Where can I recycle my milk containers that I purchase before June 1, 2009 on which there is no deposit?

Prior to June 1 you will continue to be able to recycle your empty milk containers through municipal curb- programs and drop-off depots – something you have been able to do for the past 10 years. To supplement this program, Alberta's bottle depots will also be accepting non-deposit milk containers for recycling to increase the convenience for consumers.

11. Can I redeem milk containers I purchased outside Alberta?

No, only containers that have been purchased in Alberta and charged a deposit and display the new marking of "AB DEPOSIT" printed in either red or black ink below the neck of a plastic milk container, or on the inside of a gable top, will be refunded at the bottle depots.

Recycling Marked Containers

12. I currently take my used milk and cream containers to the bottle depot now. How will things be different after June 1?

As a customer convenience many depots will accept your old, unmarked containers without a refund if you wish, as we want to see all containers recycled. Depots will not receive a deposit refund for old, unmarked containers.

Effective June 1, all permitted bottle depots will be required to collect eligible milk and cream containers and provide the appropriate refunds.

13. Do I need to keep the label on the milk jugs?

Yes, you do need to keep the label on the milk jug, so that it can be reasonably identified as a milk jug. If you remove the label you will not be eligible for a refund when you take the milk jugs to the bottle depot.

14. Can I squash the milk containers so they take up less space before I take them to a bottle depot?

Yes, you may squash the milk jugs and cartons so they take up less space – this will not affect your ability to obtain a refund at the bottle depot as long as the new marking is clearly visible.

15. Do I have to wash the milk containers before I take them to the bottle depot?

It is highly recommended that you wash or at least rinse the milk jugs and cartons, using cold water, before taking them to the bottle depot. Any milk containers with a strong odor, or with residual milk or cream, may be rejected by the bottle depot for public health and sanitation reasons.

Container Recycling Fee (CRF)

16. What is a container recycling fee (CRF) and why is it charged?

Container recycling fees represent the net cost of recycling the containers and are required to fund that portion of system operations costs (collection, transportation and marketing) that is not covered by material revenues (i.e., the 'salvage value' of the containers) and unredeemed deposits. The CRFs are non-refundable.

17. Will there be a container recycling fee (CRF) charged on milk containers over and above the deposit?

Yes, there will be a 3¢ CRF on plastic milk containers with a volume of 1 litre or less, and a 4¢ CRF on plastic milk containers over 1 litre. Milk cartons will have a CRF of 1¢ for milk cartons with a volume of 1 litre or less and 2¢ on milk cartons over 1 litre in volume. These fees are the same as those charged on similar containers (e.g. juice) currently in the deposit program

18. There already is a recycling fee charged on milk containers, why is it changing?

The current recycling fee funds the voluntary Alberta Dairy Council Milk Container Recycling Program, which provides financial and operational support to municipal and community recycling programs. The current fee will be removed as of June 1 and replaced by a container recycling fee (CRF) which will reflect the net cost of collecting milk containers in the deposit system.

19. When will I be able to take my milk containers to the bottle depot for a refund?

Deposits charged on milk containers will be implemented on June 1 so you may begin to take your eligible milk containers (i.e. marked containers purchased on or after June 1st) to a bottle depot for a refund after June 1.

Voluntary Milk Container Recycling Program

20. Many Albertans already recycle their milk containers through voluntary programs, so why add these containers to the deposit-refund system?

The Government of Alberta seeks to optimize recovery rates for all beverage containers and has set an overall target of 85%. It has concluded that the inclusion of milk containers in the deposit system, which currently achieves 75% recovery rate overall, is desirable to achieve this goal.

21. What's happening to the Voluntary Milk Container Recycling Program?

The Voluntary Milk Container Recycling Program will end on May 31, 2009. To facilitate the transition into the deposit system, the Alberta Dairy Council will provide funding to municipalities or their designates until July 31, during which time the individual municipalities will determine whether to continue to provide collection services for used milk containers.

22. Does this mean I won't be able to recycle milk containers through municipal programs anymore?

After June 1, consumers are advised to check with their local recycling authorities to determine whether milk containers will continue to be collected. Whether municipal programs continue to collect used milk containers will be up to the individual municipalities to decide. Some may elect to discontinue their collection altogether while others may elect to keep going or modify their programs to accept milk containers in mixed plastic and mixed paper bins.