

# Food Bank Best Practices



For the Handling, Storage and  
Distribution of Fresh Produce



# Top 3 Food Banking Produce Issues

(that will affect quality—especially of already-fragile produce)

- How you handle it.
- How you Store it.
- How you distribute it (FEFO vs. FIFO).



# Costly Handling and Storage Mistakes...

- Leaving strawberries or mushrooms out of temp for as little as one hour can make them lose anywhere from 1-3 days of shelf life.
- Putting tomatoes in a cooler at 35° will actually “kill” the tomato and hasten decay.
- Refrigerating bananas stops the ripening process, and accelerates decay.



## Very Cold Group

(32-38°)

Apples  
Berries  
Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Carrots  
Cauliflower  
Corn  
Grapes  
Lettuce, and Salad Mix  
Nectarines  
Onions, Green  
Peaches  
Pears  
Plums

## Cold Group

(45-50°)

Beans, Snap/Green  
Cucumbers  
Grapefruit  
Honeydew Melons  
Lemons  
Onions, Sweet  
Oranges  
Okra  
Peppers, Bell  
Pineapples  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Watermelons

## Cool Group

(55-65°)

Bananas  
Onions, bulb  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes

# Costly Handling and Storage Mistakes...

- Apples put off natural ethylene gas, a ripening agent. Avocados, tomatoes, and bananas will ripen quickly when exposed to ethylene.
- Storing ethylene producers with ethylene sensitive produce can make them lose 3-5 days of shelf life every 24 hours.
- Bacteria can start growing on bagged salad mix in as little as one hour if not kept properly refrigerated.

# Ethylene Sensitive

Bananas

Beans, Snap/Green

Broccoli

Cabbage

Carrots

Cauliflower

Cucumbers

Honeydew Melons

Lettuce, Whole/Leaf

Okra

Onions, bulb

Peppers, Bell

Squash

Sweet Potatoes

Watermelons

# Ethylene Producers

Apples

Cantaloupe

Peaches

Pears

Plums



# Costly Distribution Mistakes

- **FIFO—First in, First Out** is an S.O.P. in most warehouses; however, there are certain instances where it shouldn't be the normal process:
  - Food banks receive produce that is typically already compromised.
  - The FIFO rule should not be used when it comes to fresh produce.
  - Order of distribution should be determined upon visual inspection at the time of receiving as well as followed up on via inventory quality checks.

# FEFO—First Expiring, First Out is the key to quality produce distributions!

- FEFO is an inventory management practice for perishable goods that will minimize spoilage.
- Using FEFO means that the produce that will expire the soonest needs to leave the warehouse the soonest.
- Daily inspection of all produce on hand can help support FEFO decisions.



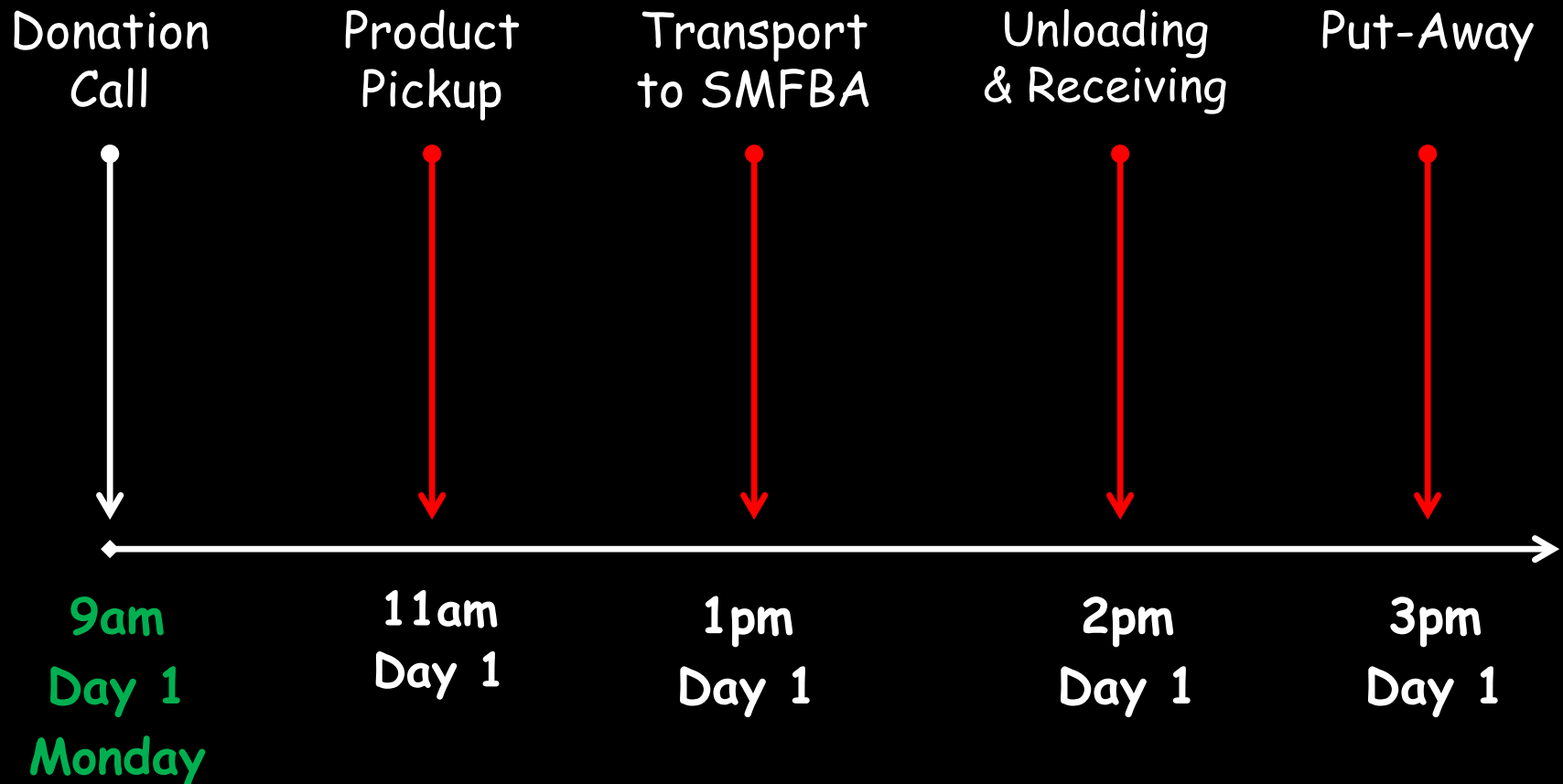
# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline Scenarios



# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline

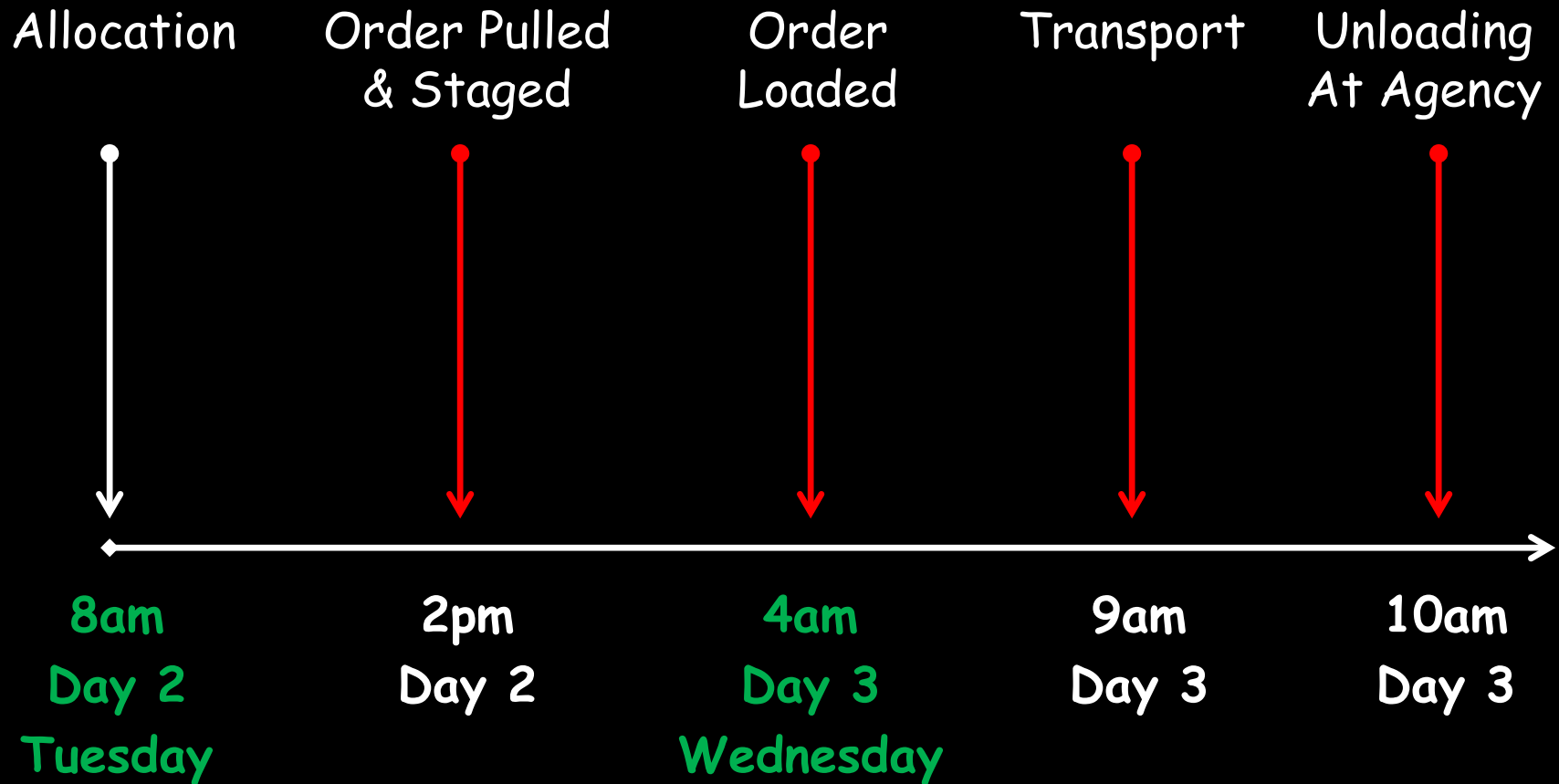
Scenario #1: Product is donated Mon. with 7 days of shelf-life left.

Every red arrow = a critical point in product handling



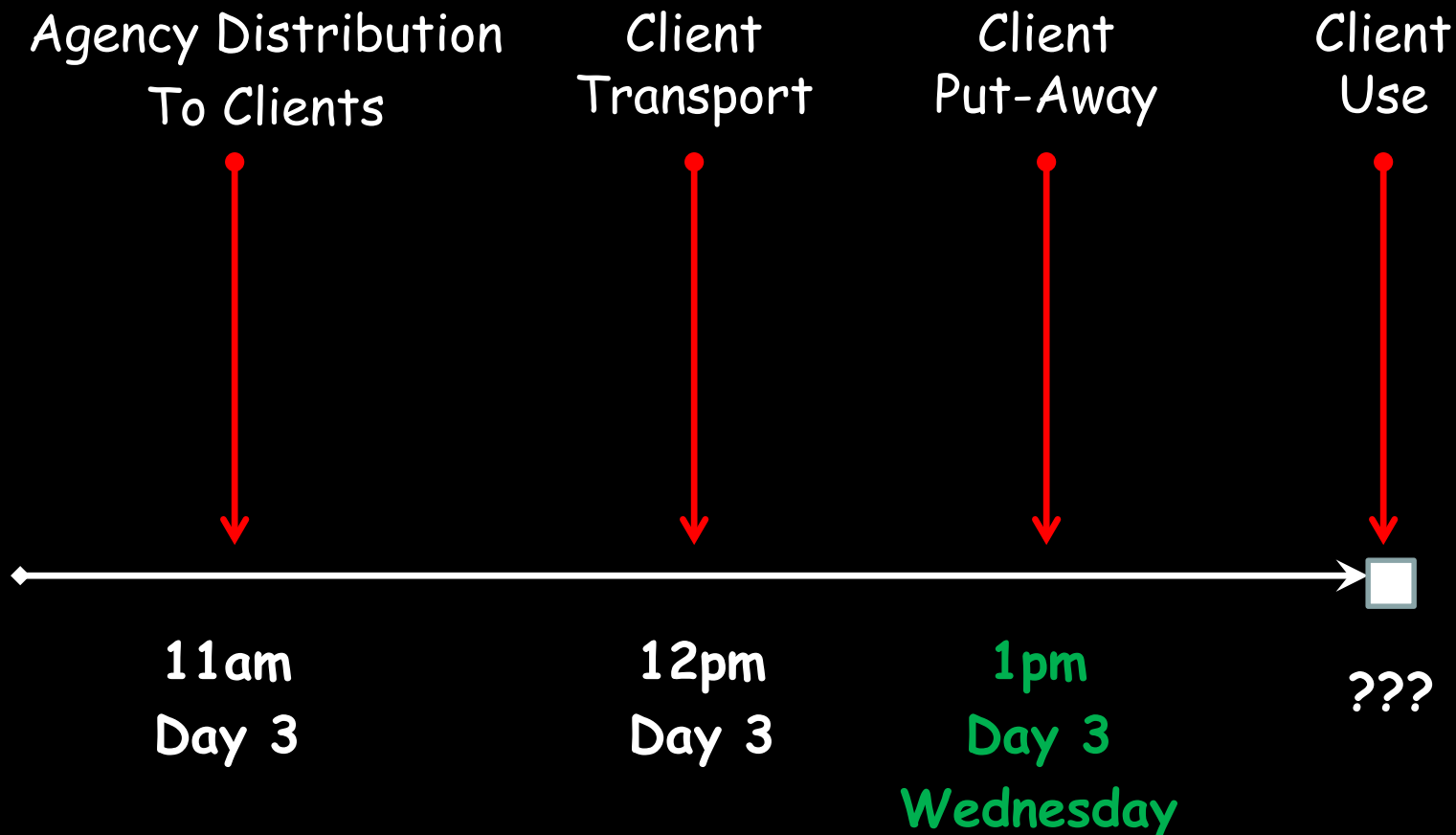
# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline

Every red arrow = a critical point in product handling



# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline

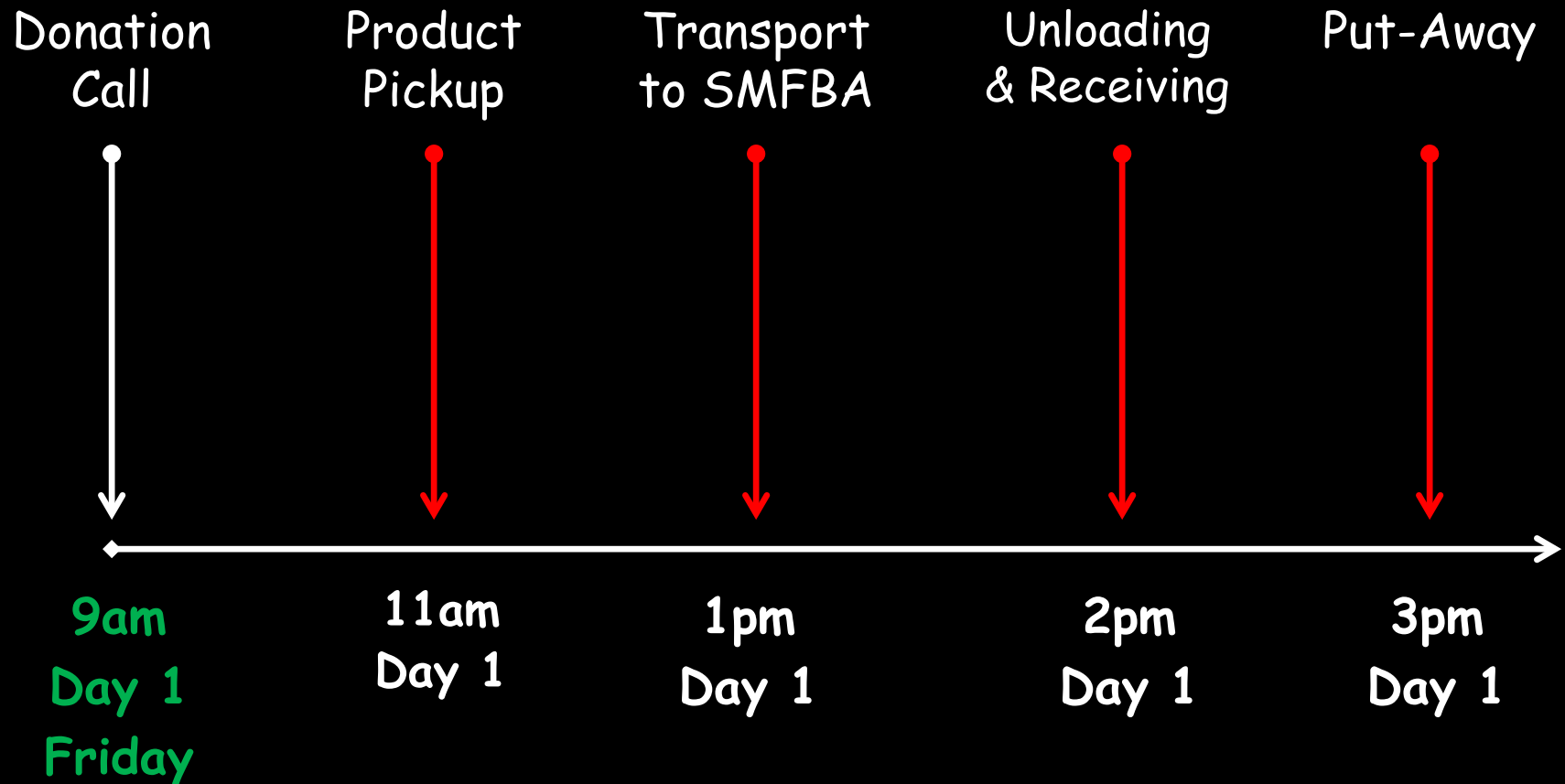
Product reaches end user with 3-4 days of shelf-life left



# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline

Scenario #2: Product is donated Fri. with 7 days of shelf-life left.

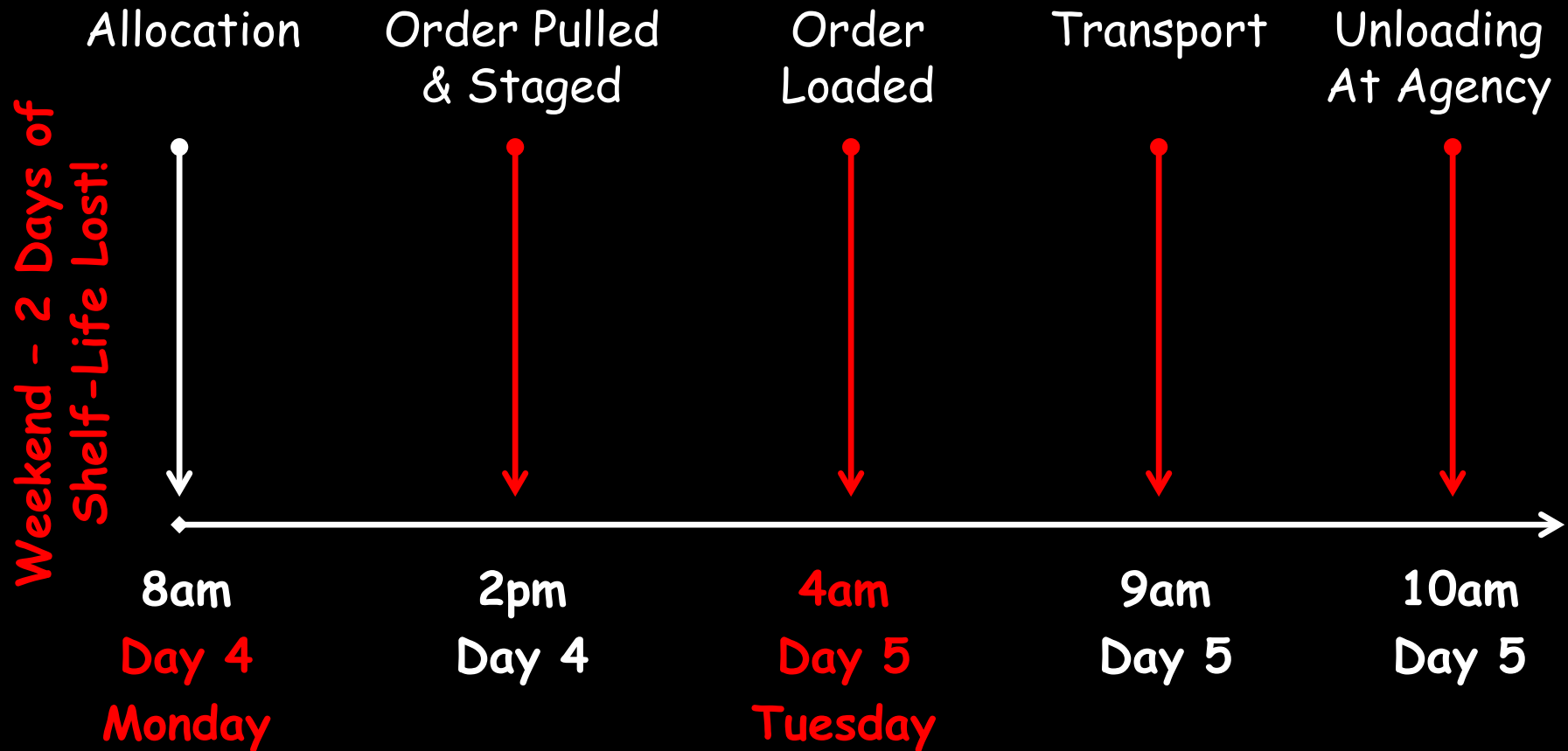
Every red arrow = a critical point in product handling



# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline

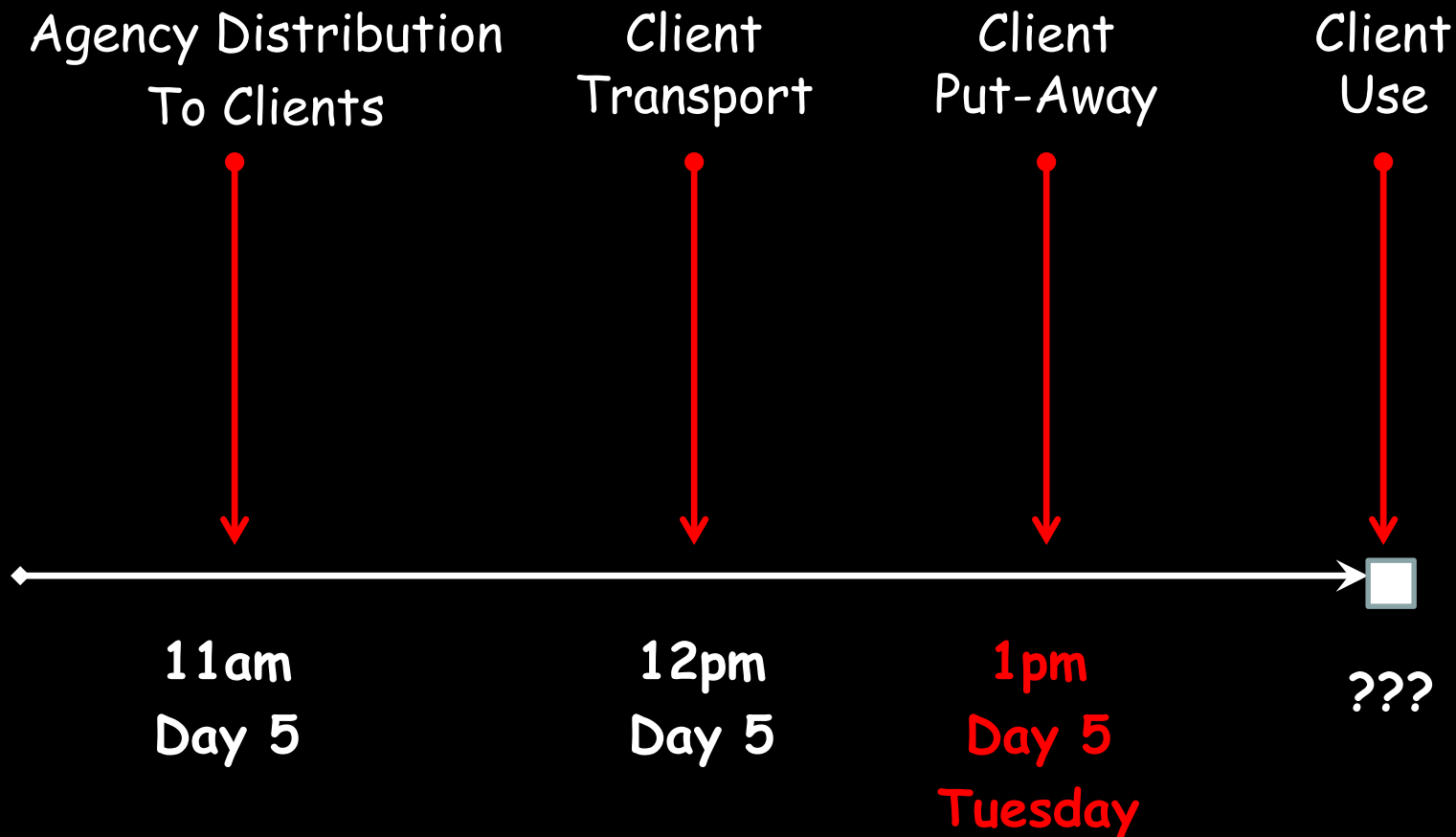
Product is donated Fri. with 7 days of shelf-life left

Every red arrow = a critical point in product handling



# Donation-to-Distribution Timeline

Product reaches end user with 1-2 days of shelf-life left



# Fresh Produce Quality

What's Acceptable and What is Not





# Apples

Acceptable



Bruising



Superficial Spot

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Not Acceptable



Alternaria  
Rot



Bull's Eye  
Rot



Blue Mold



Gray Mold

# Bananas

Acceptable



Bruising



Speckling

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Not Acceptable



Chill  
Damage



Overripe

# Cabbage

Acceptable



Small Spots on  
outer leaves

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Not Acceptable

**Black Rot**



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**Gray Mold**

# Cantaloupe

Acceptable



Slight Discoloration

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Not Acceptable



Mold



Decay



# Carrots

Acceptable



Spots



Odd Shapes

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Not Acceptable



Rot



Mold

# Lettuce

Acceptable



Brown Core

Not Acceptable



Rust



Decay



Wilted  
Leaves



# Onions (bulb)

Acceptable



Sprouts



Unusual Shape

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Not Acceptable



Bulb  
Rot



Bacterial  
Soft Rot



Sour Skin

# Oranges

Acceptable



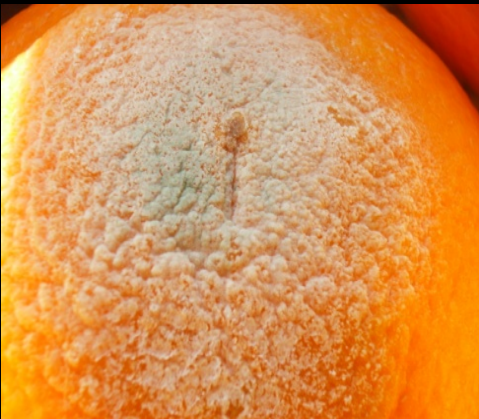
Slightly Green



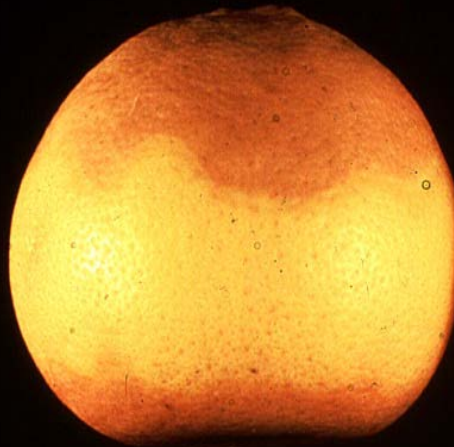
Small Spots

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Not Acceptable



Mold



Stem End  
Decay



Mold in  
Navel



# Potatoes

## Acceptable



Small Sprouts



Odd Lumps

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## Not Acceptable



Moldy Cut



Green (Solanine)



Late Blight

# Tomatoes

Acceptable



Dents



Greenish Tint

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Not Acceptable



Moldy  
Bruise



Mold



Black Rot

# Watermelon

Acceptable



Yellow Patch



Small Spots

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Not Acceptable



Decay



Anthracnose

# Thank You!

