



Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
Bill Northey, Secretary of Agriculture

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## Meat & Poultry Inspection Bureau

### SLAUGHTER-PROCESSING-LABELING-MARKETING

The Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship holds cooperative agreements with the USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service to provide a meat and poultry inspection program that meets the "equal to" provisions in the federal meat and poultry inspection acts. The dividing line between federal and state inspection is based on where the products will be distributed, as in FSIS Inspection for interstate commerce and foreign export or Iowa Inspection for intrastate commerce (Iowa only).

There have been numerous attempts to change the language in the federal statutes that prohibit the interstate sales of state inspected meat and poultry products. The prohibition is still in place.

**Interstate Commerce** – USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service  
USDA/FSIS Des Moines District Office – (515)

727-8960

**Intrastate Commerce** – Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau  
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land

Stewardship

Phone: (515) 281-3338  
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Animals that must (federal mandatory) be inspected under federal and state law before they can be sold for food: cattle, sheep, swine, goats, equines, and domestic poultry. The definition of domestic poultry in the federal rules was expanded to include the ratite family of flightless birds and young pigeon or squab as of April 26, 2001. Mandatory inspection is paid for through general tax dollars; there is no fee for mandatory livestock and poultry inspection.

In addition to the species listed above, under Iowa state law, fallow deer, sika deer, red deer, mule deer, white tailed deer, or elk must be (state mandatory) inspected before they can be sold for food in Iowa. Some states have laws that include other "exotic" species under mandatory state inspection.

All other animals that are used for food must come from "an approved source," under state food licensing laws, if they are sold to retail stores or places that prepare meals. An approved source may be a licensed food establishment or a licensed meat/poultry processing establishment.

**Voluntary Inspection:** We offer voluntary, reimbursable inspection (\$50 per hour) to official establishments who want to slaughter and process quail, pheasant, buffalo, antelope, migratory waterfowl.

**Official plants:** These are establishments that have requested and received a Grant of Inspection. They must maintain higher standards of facility and responsibility including HACCP plans for all their "processes." These establishments slaughter and process animals that are inspected and can be sold for food, process meat/poultry products under inspection, or both.

**Custom plants:** These facilities are in the business of slaughtering animals for the producers' "exclusive use" in the producers' household. The animals they slaughter are not inspected and the products from these animals are marked "NOT FOR SALE" (red meat) or "EXEMPT POULTRY P.L. 90-492" (poultry). Official plants are allowed to do "custom" or uninspected red meat for producers, but they must keep these products separate and apart from inspected meat and poultry products. Official plants may not process uninspected poultry. Custom plants may purchase inspected raw materials for further processing into retail sales.

Livestock and poultry producers often sell live animals to household consumers and arrange for the slaughter and processing at a local custom plant. The new owner or producer can have the animal slaughtered and processed without inspection for their exclusive use. If a producer wants to sell the carcass "off the rail" then the live animal must have ante- and postmortem inspection by an inspector in an official plant.

**Inspected** means ante- and postmortem inspection of the animals by federal or state meat/poultry inspection personnel in "OFFICIAL" establishments.

Both USDA/FSIS and the Iowa Meat and Poultry Inspection program offer voluntary ante- and postmortem inspection programs for some "exotic" species.

SALES IN INTERSTATE COMMERCE, MUST USE A USDA/FSIS INSPECTED ESTABLISHMENT FOR CATTLE, SHEEP, SWINE, GOATS, EQUINES, DOMESTIC POULTRY (INCLUDING RATITES AND SQUAB), AND THEIR PRODUCTS.

STATE INSPECTED CATTLE, SHEEP, SWINE, GOATS, EQUINES, DOMESTIC POULTRY (INCLUDING RATITES AND SQUAB) AND THEIR PRODUCTS MUST BE MARKETED WITHIN THE STATE OF IOWA ONLY.

**Labeling:** All labeling that bears a federal or state mark of inspection must go through a prior approval process that begins at the plant where the product is made and packaged. The labels must accurately reflect the product they describe. All labeling begins with a sketch approval that begins with the establishment owner and inspector filling out a label approval form. Labeling bearing a federal or state mark of inspection may only be applied at an "official establishment" and only the "OFFICIAL establishment" may use the label that contains the establishment number that is assigned to that plant.

**Private Labeling:** Whether processed in a federal or state inspected establishment, labeling that has a private business or company name may be obtained through an "OFFICIAL" establishment. This is referred to as "distributed by" or "prepared for" labeling. The mark of inspection will contain the establishment number for the plant where the product was actually processed, while the label itself will declare a statement such as "Distributed by Mike's Family Farm" or some similar statement.

Good communication is essential. If you have a question about meat/poultry processing, talk to us. Call this office or the USDA/FSIS office and ask questions. It is easy to answer a question and it is very difficult to fix a problem where product, time, and money are involved.

#### RELATED INFORMATION

1. If you want to build and operate your own licensed meat or poultry processing establishment, contact Mike Mamminga for state inspection (intrastate commerce) or the USDA/FSIS District Office in Des Moines for interstate commerce. The facility information that is included, will offer some guidance, but it is not to be considered as complete in itself.
2. All "OFFICIAL" products produced must have a label and must have prior approval and that starts at the plant level. A label must contain certain information.
  - a. The name, address, and zip code of the manufacturer, or in the case of a private label, the phrase "Distributed by" or "Prepared for" followed by the name, address, and zip code of the responsible party. If your company is in the phone book, a street address is not required; if your company is not

in the phone book, a street address is required. Phone numbers are options.

- b. The mark of inspection.
- c. A net weight statement.
- d. A warning statement – Keep Frozen or Keep Refrigerated – as applicable.
- e. The true name of the product.
- f. An ingredient statement if composed of two or more ingredients – the label approval process will identify an appropriate ingredient statement for state inspected product.
- g. A “safe handling label” on all raw products.
- h. Other information may be included on a label as long as it is not false or misleading. If you specify any “claims” you must be able to prove the claim. Point of purchase information such as signs and handouts are considered the same as labeling as far as the misbranding provisions of the federal or state acts.

IF YOU HAVE A SPECIAL RECIPE FOR A MEAT/POULTRY PRODUCT, YOU MUST SHARE THAT EXACT RECIPE WITH US. LAW REQUIRES US TO KEEP THAT INFORMATION IN A SECURE PLACE.

3. Exempt or uninspected poultry – federal law provides for the sale of some uninspected poultry, an exemption not provided for red meat animals.

- a. 1,000 birds per calendar year to household consumers only – keep records
- b. Up to 20,000 birds of your own raising in a licensed, exempt plant that you own and that’s all you can do and no birds can be slaughtered for any other individuals. All birds must be labeled as “Exempt Poultry” P.L. 90-492.

4. While state inspected cattle, sheep, swine, goats, equines, and domestic poultry (including ratites and squab) are limited to intrastate commerce only, there are no restrictions on state inspected “exotic” meat/meat products entering interstate commerce. There are FDA limitations on the use of sodium and potassium nitrite/nitrate in “exotic” animal products sold in interstate commerce. We will advise on the label approval of this restriction, and leave it up to you to comply or not.

The following sheets will describe the facility requirements for an “OFFICIAL” red meat or poultry plant. Prior approval of blueprints is no longer required, but we will answer any questions you might have during your designing phase. It’s much easier to change something on paper than to have to change a structure that has been built incorrectly.

If you are looking at opening an existing facility, contact this office to arrange for a facility review by one of our Supervisory Veterinarians. They will contact you to arrange a convenient time to meet and look over the facility and gather information to give you a report of any changes that would be required. There is no charge for this service.

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**Mailing Address:** IDALS, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319: PH: 515-281-5321

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