

Meat Processing in North Dakota

Guidelines for Opening a Business

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture's North Dakota Meat and Poultry Inspection Program (NDMPIP) is the agency responsible for regulating most meat processors throughout the state. Meat processors not covered by the NDMPIP are inspected by either USDA-Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS) or the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH).

North Dakota laws mandate that all species of animals and all types of meat products be inspected under state and/or federal law before sold for human food. All state inspections conducted during normal hours are paid with general tax dollars; there are no fees for livestock, poultry or product inspection. Federal inspection operates the same except for species classified as voluntary, such as elk or bison. FSIS will charge plants an hourly fee for inspection of these species.

Individuals or businesses may choose from four types of operations. Each has specific allowances,



restrictions and regulations. Each person has the option of operating under one, or a combination of two or more, of the types listed. This allows for various activities to be conducted within one operation.

State-inspected (official) establishments

These operations slaughter livestock and/or process meat products under regulated inspection. Inspected activities include: inspection of all live animals as they are presented for slaughter; post-slaughter inspection of various tissues to ensure a disease-free carcass; proper handling of product; and processing, cooking, cooling, packaging, storage and labeling. Under federal law, all state inspection standards must be "at least equal to" those of federally inspected operations.

Inspected products "earn" the state mark, separating them from retail or custom exempt product, and are now eligible for retail or wholesale. This mark of inspection can broaden a facility's market considerably.

State and federal regulations require a "Grant of Inspection" be obtained prior to operating as an official state establishment. To qualify for a grant, establishments are first required to meet certain regulatory requirements, which include:

- Facility requirements and sanitation standards (both more rigorous than those set for custom exempt establishments)
- Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans
- Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP's)
- Other standard operating procedures

Once a grant has been issued and the establishment begins operating there will be additional requirements such as product verification testing and record keeping.

Federally inspected establishments

These operations are inspected by USDA-FSIS with the same standards used for state-inspected facilities. For more information on developing a federally inspected establishment, contact the Minneapolis District office at (612) 370-2400 or visit their website at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Home/index.asp>.

Custom exempt establishments

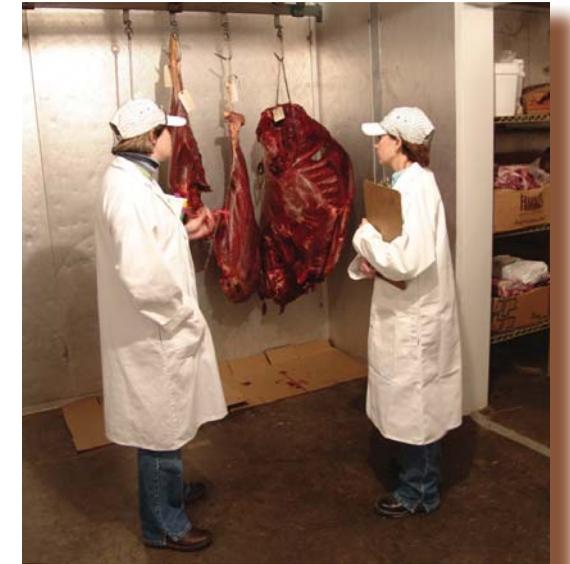
Custom exempt establishments differ significantly from state or federally inspected plants. These establishments are not inspected on a continuous basis because they only process meat for the owner of the animal. Because the animals and processed meat are not inspected, the products cannot be sold and may only be consumed by the owner, the owner's immediate family and non-paying guests. Custom processed meat must be marked "not for sale" and identified with the establishment's name or assigned number.

These establishments must meet specific facility requirements and maintain sanitary conditions. The NDMPIP inspects plants on a regular basis but at a much lower frequency than the state or federally inspected program.

Retail exempt establishments

These businesses purchase meat and poultry products from approved inspected sources (state or FSIS); further process them and then sell it at a retail counter. Retail-exempt products must be fully labeled, with the exception of the inspection legend, and cannot be sold in excess of normal retail quantities. Limited quantities of single ingredient products may be sold to hotels, restaurants, and/or institutions (HRI), but no sale of retail meat products may be made to other retail stores for resale.

Like custom exempt, these operations are not exempt from all inspection, only from the inspection of the preparation of products. They are inspected by the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH) and must meet their regulations for producing food. For more information contact the NDDH Food and Lodging Division at (800) 472-2927 or visit their website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/FoodLodging/>.



Facility requirements

All individuals processing meat products, including all types of facilities listed above must meet current facility requirements and have their facilities approved prior to operation.

The facility requirement regulations are entitled "Sanitation Performance Standards" and within federal regulations (Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 416.1-416.6). While these regulations allow for a large amount of flexibility in construction and design, they place the responsibility for the building design and materials used in the hands of the owner/operator. Facilities must be conducive to the production of wholesome meat products that are free from contamination.

These regulation highlights are outlined below. For additional and more detailed information, please refer to the NDMPIP Facility Handbook.

- Walls, floors and ceilings within establishments must be built of durable materials impervious to moisture, and free of rust, flaking, splinters, etc. All seams must be sealed to make the entire surface impermeable to moisture. Surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized as necessary.
- All outside openings must be constructed and maintained to prevent the entrance of vermin, such as flies or mice.
- Lighting must be of sufficient intensity for the procedures performed in each area and be shatterproof or protected with covers.
- Plumbing must meet all state and local codes.
- A supply of potable running water at a suitable temperature and pressure must be provided in all areas.
- Hand washing facilities and sinks must be provided and adequate for the size of the establishment.
- Floors must be in good condition with adequate drainage.
- Ventilation must be adequate to control air-borne contamination and remove excessive heat, condensation, smoke, or fumes.



Prior to construction of new establishments or alterations to an existing building, plans must be submitted to the NDMPIP for review. Plans must contain sufficient detail for the NDMPIP to determine if requirements have been met.

HACCP

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) is a science-based approach to manufacturing food products. The goal behind the HACCP program is to identify all potential food safety hazards (e.g. bacteria); set control measures (e.g. cooking) for each hazard; monitor the controls and keep records at each of these steps to prove the hazards have been prevented, eliminated or controlled. At least one employee in the establishment must be trained in HACCP and be responsible for the implementation and management of the HACCP program.

Establishments maintain control over their manufacturing processes through documentation, verification and monitoring to create a safer process for production of its food items. The regulatory requirements for HACCP in meat inspection can be found in 9 CFR 417.

SSOP

Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP's) are written plans that describe procedures followed to maintain overall plant sanitation. These include cleaning of all processing equipment, product contact and noncontact surfaces of the facility on a routine basis, and maintaining records of the monitoring of these sanitation activities. SSOPs are divided into two parts - preoperational and operational.

Preoperational is cleaning that takes place after all processes are completed at the end of each day so the plant is ready to start operations the following day in a clean and sanitary facility.

Operational is cleaning and sanitation taking place throughout the course of the day during slaughtering and/or processing activities. The regulatory requirements for SSOP in meat inspection can be found in 9 CFR 416.11-416.16.

Labeling

Any meat product sold or offered for sale must bear an appropriate label. This label must have:

1. The true name of the product
2. The product ingredients, if applicable
3. The name and address of the processor or distributor
4. The net weight of the product
5. The inspection legend (except retail exempt product)
6. One of the following statements or a similar perishable warning statement: "Keep Refrigerated," "Perishable," "Keep Under Refrigeration," or "Keep Frozen" if the product is perishable.

All product formulations, or formulas, labels and labeling information used in the labeling of state or federally inspected products must be submitted to the inspection agency for review.

More Information

For additional information, please contact the meat inspection staff at the North Dakota Department of Agriculture at (701) 328-2231 or (800) 242-7535 or visit our website at www.agdepartment.com.



Doug Goehring, Commissioner
Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services



North Dakota Meat & Poultry Inspection Program

