

Food Safety Sentinel

Quarterly newsletter for Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's provincially licensed meat facility operators

The Importance of Labelling Mechanically Tenderized Beef

In 2012, the Canadian government investigated several cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 and concluded that 5 of them were likely associated with beef that had been mechanically tenderized.

Mechanically tenderized beef (MTB) refers to uncooked, solid beef cuts where the surface has been pierced with instruments such as blades or needles, or has been injected with a marinade. Generally, bacteria is limited to the surface of a cut of meat and the inside of the meat is sterile. However, when the meat is pierced, bacteria can be pushed from the surface to the inside of the muscle. If this meat is consumed as "rare" or "medium rare," it can be dangerous. It is important that all MTB is fully cooked throughout.

Because it can be difficult for the consumer to know that meat has been mechanically tenderized, it is important to accurately label MTB products so that informed choices can be made on how to safely prepare the product.

What are the labelling requirements?

All meat processors (provincial and federal), retailers, importers and butcher shops are required to include the following statements on the label:

- Identification as "mechanically tenderized"
- Safe cooking instructions, such as "Cook to a minimum internal temperature of 63°C (145°F)."
- For steaks, an additional safe cooking instruction to "Turn steak over at least twice during cooking."

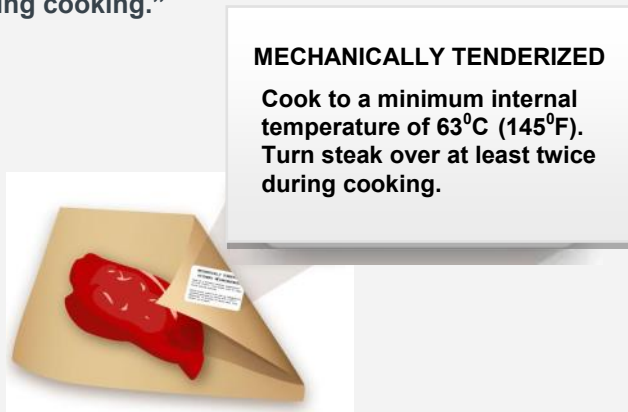


Figure 1: Non-prepackaged MTB product that has been labelled with the MTB labelling requirements.
Photo credit: Health Canada

For more information on MTB, including more labelling examples, please visit: Health Canada Guidance on MTB Labelling: <http://bit.ly/2m4TKup> and CFIA Labelling Requirements: <http://bit.ly/2IDaR5s>

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Editor's Note:

This is the last issue of the Food Safety Sentinel newsletter. If you have any questions, please contact the Safe Food Section at 780-415-4570, toll free in Alberta dial 310-0000 first.

Spring 2017 ISSUE NO. 12

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What's Going on in the Food Safety Branch?

Microbiological Survey in Pork

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's Food Safety Branch has begun a survey of *E. coli* O157:H7 in pork at provincially licensed abattoirs in Alberta.

The purpose of the project is to determine the frequency of *E. coli* O157:H7 in both swine feces and swine carcasses at provincial abattoirs in Alberta.

The information collected will be used to help industry adopt food safety measures and will help to focus future food safety surveillance.

For more information on this project, contact Dr. Saida Essendoubi at saida.essendoubi@gov.ab.ca or call 780-644-1464, toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000.

Growing Forward 2 Food Safety Funding Options Available for Provincially Licensed Meat Facilities

- **Food Safety Testing Equipment:** Water activity meter, pH meter, thermometers, ATP testing equipment and swabs, in-house micro-testing equipment, incubator for micro-testing, data loggers, allergen testing equipment, food safety ingredient scale and its calibration weights. **80% reimbursement. Maximum \$5,000.**
- **Non-Capital:** Consultant costs, staff training (internal and external) and program development (e.g. recall, traceability, allergen). **50% reimbursement. Maximum \$25,000.**
- **Capital:** Sanitation equipment, equipment and materials to support best practices in food safety (antimicrobial carcass spray start-up costs), facility upgrades with materials approved for use in a food facility, utensils, totes and bins approved for food use and traceability systems. **20% reimbursement. Maximum \$15,000.**

For more information about the Program, please call 310-FARM or visit the Growing Forward 2 website at www.growingforward.alberta.ca

Poultry Inspection Modernization (PIM) Pilot Project needs your Participation!



Examiner Certification testing can be requested by contacting Murray Yaschuk at murray.yaschuk@gov.ab.ca or by phone at 780-644-3019, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

Appointed Inspector Program in Alberta

Veterinarians can act as inspectors under the *Meat Inspection Act* to help livestock producers with emergency situations. For example, an animal unfit for transportation can be inspected by an Appointed Inspector and slaughtered on the premises allowing it to be sold within Alberta.

The Appointed Inspector list can be found at <http://bit.ly/2naO7tO> or by calling the Meat Inspection Administrator at 780-422-2104 (toll-free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000).

Did you know.....?

If any meat product is not ready-to-eat (NRTE) but has the appearance of a cooked product, must have the following information on its label:

- the words "must be cooked," "cook and serve," "raw product," or "uncooked"
- clear cooking instructions such as the minimum internal temperature and the time it takes at that temperature to have a fully cooked product.

Also, the meat product label cannot have any words on it suggesting that the meat product is ready-to-eat.

An example of a meat product that is NRTE include uncooked Farmers sausage.