

Food Safety Sentinel

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

Recall—Are you prepared?

A food recall is the process of quickly and efficiently removing food that may cause consumers to become ill from the marketplace.

Examples of when a recall is necessary may include:

- Mislabelling (e.g. allergens, incorrect cooking instructions)
- Product linked to a foodborne illness outbreak (e.g. *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Listeria monocytogenes*)
- Packaging defects
- Product tampering

A **recall plan** is a written action plan that is carefully developed and tested to ensure it is effective and efficient in removing the affected product from the marketplace. There are **10 basic elements** that should be included in your recall plan:

1. Create a Recall Team

Identify recall team members and assign recall duties so that the recall procedures are conducted quickly and smoothly.

2. Maintain a Customer Complaint File

- Record the details of the complaint information
- Investigate the complaint and record findings
- Take appropriate action based on the investigation findings

3. Keep an Updated Regulatory Authority Contact List

If a product has been sold or distributed that may cause illness to consumers, immediately contact both your regional Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's Meat Inspection Supervisor and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in Alberta at 587-230-2518, even if you are a non-federally registered facility.

4. Maintain a Traceability System

A traceability system is the backbone of a recall. It involves record-keeping procedures that track any food-producing animal, food product, ingredient or packaging material through all stages of production, processing and distribution. To develop a traceability system, the following points need to be documented:

- **Finished product lot codes:** All products manufactured should be coded. This information will inform consumers what products are associated with any recall activities. The smaller the lot size, the more manageable the recall becomes. It is important to document the definition of a "lot" in your recall program.

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10 Basic Elements of a Recall Plan



Poultry Inspection Modernization Pilot Project Update:

Examiner certification testing can now be requested by contacting Murray Yaschuk by calling 780-644-3019, toll free 310-0000 or email at Murray.Yaschuk@gov.ab.ca

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- **Link all ingredient, meat product and packaging lot codes to finished product lot codes:** If an ingredient, meat product or packaging material has caused a food safety issue, being able to trace it back to the supplier will increase the chances of correcting the problem and avoiding it happening again. When an ingredient, meat product or packaging material is received, record its lot number and link it to a formula or production information.
- **Link the ingredients of rework to the finished product lot codes:** All rework should be assigned a lot number to be later linked to the final product it goes into.
- **Link finished product lot codes to wholesale customers:** This can be done by including the lot codes sold to each customer on the distribution records.

5. Keep Accurate Production Records

It is the responsibility of the facility to ensure that as much of the affected product as possible is removed from the marketplace. Having an accurate record of how much product has been sold, and how much is still on the premises, helps ensure that all customers are notified of the recall. This means documenting the amount of each lot of each product manufactured.

6. Keep Accurate Shipping and Sales Records

Keeping accurate distribution records allows you to limit your recall to only the customers who received the affected products.

7. Keep Recalled Product Records

If recalled products are returned to your facility, clearly identify and isolate them, and document the amount returned so that you know that the product has been controlled and does not re-enter the marketplace.

8. Maintain Recall Procedures

Your recall plan must contain a step-by-step description of what to do during a recall.

9. Review the Recall Effectiveness

Your facility is responsible for ensuring that all of the customers whom you shipped the recalled product to are notified. Also, you must notify all customers to stop distribution of the affected products, and all recalled products must be returned to the meat facility's control.

10. Test Your Recall Plan

Mock recalls test the company's ability to recall products without actually recalling them. It is recommended to test your recall plan at least annually. The goal is to be able to identify every affected lot, know exactly where it is at any point in the process, and know whom to contact to bring it back.

For more information, including recall plan templates, please visit our website at foodsafety.alberta.ca—[Food Safety Guide Book](#) or email foodsafety@gov.ab.ca for a hardcopy.

References: Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's [Food Safety Guidebook](#) and CFIA's [Manufacturers' Guide—Recall Plans](#)

Did you know?

The Growing Forward 2 Food Safety Systems Processor Program will fund 50% of the cost for program development, including the development of traceability systems and recall plans. For more information, please visit www.growingforward.alberta.ca or call 310-FARM

