

# **Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations Poultry and Poultry Products**



*Alberta*   
Government

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Rural Development Division  
7000 - 113 Street  
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# **Poultry and Poultry Products Overview**

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Farm direct marketing is the sale of food products directly to the consumer at a farmers' market, roadside stand, farm store, u-pick operation or public market, on-line or through community supported agriculture (CSA). Successful farm direct marketing involves consistently supplying safe, high-quality products in a clean, customer-friendly environment that supports the development of a trust relationship between you (the supplier) and your customers.

Producers and processors must be aware of the federal and provincial legislative requirements that must be met for producing and marketing agri-food products. Agri-food products are those food products that are made using agricultural products, ingredients or processes. You need to know and adhere to the legislation that applies to your farm direct marketing operation. Failure to comply with the legislation may lead to fines or other penalties and possibly, to decreased sales.

You also need to be aware that the rules change depending on the marketing channel and venue. What is an acceptable, even desirable, product at a farmers' market may not be allowed for sale to a restaurant, public market or on-line. For example, your free-range chickens that sell out at the market cannot be sold to a restaurant if you do not have quota. Requirements for licences, permits, packaging, grading and inspection vary with the avenue used to get your product to market.

Legislation also has different requirements for the construction and operation of the facilities used to produce your products. For example, inspected frozen turkeys can be stored in a freezer in your home but can only be sold at an Alberta approved farmers' market. If you want to sell your inspected poultry products to a restaurant or on-line, then you will need to have a dedicated storage area, in your home or on the farm, that is permitted by Alberta Health Services.

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# Introduction to Poultry and Poultry Meat Products

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This booklet highlights the pertinent legislation that applies to the production, processing and sale of poultry and poultry products regardless of where and how they are sold. As a producer or processor who direct markets agri-food products, you need to become familiar with all the legislation that applies to your operation.

It is important to remember that federal law takes precedence over provincial law, which, in turn, takes precedence over municipal bylaws. Different acts and regulations often work together to define requirements.

An act is a written law or statute that has been enacted by a legislative body such as Parliament or the Legislative Assembly. A regulation, sometimes referred to as subordinate legislation, defines the application and enforcement of an act and is made under the authority of the act.

Both pieces of legislation have an effect on your business. In some cases, the regulation may be more pertinent, such as the Food Regulation under the *Public Health Act*. The *Public Health Act* does not directly address farmers' markets, but the Food Regulation contains an entire Part that outlines the requirements for a farmers' market.

## Legislation Affecting Production

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### Animal Welfare

Protecting animal welfare is a shared responsibility between government and industry. The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits anyone from wilfully causing animals to suffer from neglect, pain or injury. The Criminal Code is enforced by police services within Alberta.

#### **Federal**

The federal Health of Animals Regulations under the *Health of Animals Act* governs the humane treatment of animals during transport within Canada. No animal being loaded or unloaded shall be handled in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering. Under this legislation, you should not be transporting animals of different species unless those animals are segregated.

To assist you as a producer in addressing animal welfare issues, the poultry industry has developed national guidelines for the care and handling of birds. These codes of practice promote sound management and welfare practices through recommendations and requirements for housing, handling, transportation, processing and other animal husbandry practices.

The chicken, turkey and egg industries have developed animal care programs specific to their commodities. Complying with the technical requirements of the specific commodity animal care programs is mandatory for authorized chicken and egg producers because compliance is a condition of a producer's licence.

More information about these animal care programs is available on the websites of the commodity agricultural marketing boards. (See the websites listed at the end of this booklet.)

## **Provincial**

The *Animal Protection Act* (Alberta) prohibits a person from placing an animal in distress and is enforced by a number of agencies including the Alberta SPCA. Peace officers can enter property, other than a dwelling, to investigate whether birds are being provided with adequate care and are not being abused or subjected to undue hardship, privation or neglect. Animals in distress or abandoned animals may be taken into custody or euthanized.

As the owner or the person in charge of an animal, you must do the following:

- ensure that the animal has adequate food and water
- provide the animal with adequate care when the animal is wounded or ill
- provide the animal with reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold
- provide the animal with adequate shelter, ventilation and space

The Animal Protection Regulation prescribes conditions for the loading and transporting of poultry. It is unlawful to injure birds, by use of a prod, goad or other instrument, being loaded into or unloaded from a vehicle.

Vehicles and crates used to transport poultry must meet the following conditions:

- can contain the birds at all times
- are large enough to transport all birds without causing injury or undue suffering due to crowding
- are high enough for birds to stand in their natural position
- have adequate space for birds to sit down comfortably
- protect them from exposure to extreme injurious heat or cold or exhaust fumes
- provide adequate ventilation
- will not injure the birds because of broken, cracked or damaged siding or flooring material or exposed fittings, bolt heads or other objects projecting into the area where the animals are held

Vehicles and crates used to transport poultry must meet strict conditions to ensure animal welfare.

## **Animal Health**

### **Federal**

The purpose of the *Health of Animals Act* (Canada) and Regulations is twofold:

- prevent the introduction of animal diseases and toxic substances into Canada
- prevent the spread within Canada of diseases of animals and toxic substances that either affect human health or could have a significant economic effect on the Canadian poultry industry

Reportable diseases are outlined in the Act and the Reportable Diseases Regulations and are usually of significant importance to human or animal health or to the Canadian economy.

You or your veterinarian are required to immediately report the presence of a bird that is

contaminated or suspected of being contaminated with one of the designated diseases to a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) district veterinarian. Control or eradication measures will be applied immediately.

### **Provincial**

The purpose of the provincial *Animal Health Act* (AHA) and Regulations is to minimize the impact of animal diseases in agricultural animals in Alberta and to enhance market access, public health and food safety through effective disease control measures.

This Act enables a rapid, effective response to a poultry disease occurrence by authorizing control measures against disease spread, disease surveillance, carcass disposal provisions, livestock market inspection and licensing as well as control of the sale of production animal medicines.

The Reportable and Notifiable Diseases Regulation designates certain diseases as reportable or notifiable. You, as the owner of poultry, or your veterinarian must advise the Chief Provincial Veterinarian of suspected or confirmed reportable or notifiable diseases within 24 hours.

“Reportable diseases” refers to diseases that are threats to market access, animal or public health or the economy. These diseases require immediate action to control or eradicate them. Diseases designated as “notifiable” are monitored for trade purposes and to study their incidence and distribution within Alberta. Notifiable diseases do not require control actions but are important to monitor for changes or unusual trends.

## **Traceability**

Traceability is the ability to follow an item or a group of items, such as an animal or food products, from one point in the supply chain to another. The three pillars of livestock traceability are premises identification, animal identification and animal movement. However, premises identification is the only pillar of traceability that is regulated for poultry at this time. The *Health of Animals Act* (Canada) governs livestock traceability activities in Canada.

To ensure an effective, rapid response to animal emergencies in livestock, including fire, flood and disease outbreaks in poultry and birds, the provincial *Animal Health Act* (Alberta) establishes the necessary infrastructure and traceability systems within Alberta.

The federal *Health of Animals Act* governs livestock traceability in Canada while the provincial *Animal Health Act* act establishes the infrastructure and systems.

Premises Identification (PID) is a way of linking livestock, including poultry, to land locations or premises. Poultry birds include chickens, geese, turkeys, ducks, pheasants, quail and ratites (flightless birds, for example, ostrich and emu).

Under Alberta’s Premises Identification Regulation, if you own poultry and that poultry animal is kept at a premises other than a commingling site, you need to apply for a PID Account and obtain at least one PID Number associated with where the animal(s) are located.

A PID Number is a unique identifying number assigned to a specific piece of property and/or operation. You must keep the information on your PID Account up-to-date.

If you operate commingling sites (a site where animals of more than one owner are housed together), you are also required to obtain a PID Account, register all your commingling sites and inform the animal owners of the PID Number(s) for those sites.

## Deadstock Disposal

Under Alberta's Destruction and Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation of the *Animal Health Act*, the owner of a dead animal shall dispose of the carcass within 48 hours of its death. Depending on the circumstances, the dead birds can be composted, incinerated, buried, rendered or naturally disposed of as specified in the Regulation.

Proper carcass disposal is important for both the prevention of poultry disease transmission and the protection of air and water quality. Access to carcasses by scavengers is only permitted under the guidelines for natural disposal. If your birds have been euthanized with drugs or other chemical substances, you must take immediate steps to prevent scavengers from gaining access to the carcasses.

When a bird is known or suspected to have died from an infectious disease or reportable disease, the owner of the animal shall dispose of it in accordance with the directions issued by the CFIA or the Chief Provincial Veterinarian. Such an animal cannot be disposed of by natural disposal.

The Regulation also pertains to the disposal of inedible offal or condemned material from animals slaughtered.

## Manure Management

To ensure environmental protection, the provincial *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA) sets manure management standards for all operations in Alberta that handle manure. The legislation includes a permitting process for confined feeding operations. The permit requirements are based on the number of animals the operation manages; these requirements are different for each livestock type. For example, small poultry farmers (less than 2,000 broilers or less than 1,000 turkeys, ducks or geese) are not required to register with AOPA, but are expected to meet the requirements of the Act.

The Act defines siting and construction standards for manure storage and collection facilities, addresses the application of manure to agricultural land and ensures environmental protection through an approval process that involves municipalities and directly affected neighbours.

AOPA sets out a framework for resolving conflicts between agricultural producers and the public relating to nuisances such as odour, dust, noise and smoke resulting from agriculture activities.

## Marketing Boards

The *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* (Alberta) provides the framework for marketing boards. Within the parameters of the legislation, each poultry marketing board develops a set of governing regulations.



Under the Act and Regulations, any person who produces, markets or processes a regulated product is required to comply with the regulations and provide the appropriate marketing board any information or record relating to the production, marketing or processing of the regulated product.

Agricultural marketing boards have a non-refundable service charge. They represent supply managed commodities. Supply management regulates and limits the production of a specific commodity using a licensing and quota system.

A quota and licence issued by the commodity-specific agricultural marketing board gives a producer the right to produce a certain amount of product. All licensed producers are required to provide specified production and marketing information to the appropriate marketing board in order to maintain their licences.

In Alberta, it may be illegal to raise or sell supply managed commodities without quota unless your production is below the limit set by each commodity.

Production of certain commodities in Alberta is regulated by quotas and licences unless production is below a set limit.

## **Chicken**

Under the Alberta Chicken Producers' Plan Regulation and the Alberta Chicken Producers Marketing Regulation, you, as a producer, are exempt from licensing and quota provisions if you do not produce more than 2,000 chickens in a calendar year and you reside on the land where the chickens are produced.

The exemption carries the following conditions:

- chickens may only be consumed by you and your family
- or*
- chickens may only be sold directly to end consumers from your chicken operation or at a farmers' market

The legislation also allows for a communal group production quota that permits a communal group to produce, market and consume up to 6,000 chickens in a calendar year.

A communal group is defined as follows:

- a community of not fewer than 50 individuals in which the members live and work together in an agricultural enterprise
- members are not permitted to own property in their own right
- members devote their working lives to the activities of the communal group

Chickens produced under a communal group production quota must meet conditions similar to the exemption criteria above:

- chickens may only be consumed by members of the communal group
- or*
- chickens may only be sold directly to end consumers from their chicken operation or at a farmers' market

The Alberta Chicken Producers also has two quota leasing programs: direct marketing and organic chicken. To be eligible for either program, you need to be licensed with the Alberta Chicken Producers Board. The Direct Marketing Lease Program is available to producers who currently own or lease quota and wish to expand their businesses by direct marketing. An application form, along with a copy of your business plan, must be submitted to the Alberta Chicken Producers, who will determine how much quota is available for you to lease.

The Organic Chicken Lease Program is available to any person. An application form, along with organic certification documentation, must be submitted to the Alberta Chicken Producers. Under the terms of this lease program, it is the responsibility of the applicant to locate quota that can be leased from an authorized producer. Unlike the Direct Marketing Lease Program, there is no quota set aside for organic production although the agricultural marketing board has established a limit on the total amount of quota available to organic producers.

Similar conditions apply to both the Direct Marketing and Organic Chicken Lease Programs:

- the need to apply for the program, recognizing that you need to meet the application criteria
- each program has “maximums” available, both for the province and for each successful applicant
- each program has fees – license application fees, lease fees, service charges and potential over-marketing levies
- each program has requirements the producer must follow

Under both quota leasing programs, producers must meet the requirements of the industry’s on-farm food safety assurance and animal care programs. For more information on these special marketing programs, contact the Alberta Chicken Producers.

## **Eggs**

The Egg Farmers of Alberta Plan Regulation and the Egg Farmers of Alberta Marketing Regulation specify that no person shall possess, whether by ownership or otherwise, more than 300 domestic hens unless that person is licensed by the Egg Farmers of Alberta marketing board. If you plan to use the services of a registered grading station, you will need to be authorized by the Board and will be required to pay a service charge.

The Egg Farmers of Alberta have a new entrant program. When Alberta is allocated additional national quota, lots of 1,500 hens of new entrant quota are made available. The Egg Farmers of Alberta will make public notification of the program when quota is available. Applicants submit required information to the marketing board, and if there are too many eligible applicants for the lots available, a draw is held to determine the successful applicants. For more information on this program, contact the Egg Farmers of Alberta.

## Turkey

The Turkey Producers Plan Regulation and the Turkey Marketing Regulation do not require you to be licensed with the Alberta Turkey Producers if you meet the following conditions:

- reside on the land on which the turkeys are produced
  - produce fewer than 90 turkeys in a quota year
- or*
- produce between 90 and 300 turkeys in a quota year and are registered with the Alberta Turkey Producers Board

Without a licence, the use and sale of your turkeys are restricted as follows:

- can be consumed by you and your family
  - can be sold to consumers from your production site
- or*
- can be sold to consumers at a public market

## On-Farm Food Safety Programs

On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) programs reduce the risk of unsafe food products originating from the farm. The programs help create a proper operational environment for food safety on the farm through the implementation of Good Production Practices (GPPs). These types of practices can be applied to any type of agricultural production operation.

### Key practices:

- a thorough knowledge of the hazards and risks on the farm
- a good understanding of the GPPs recommended for the commodity and type of farming operation
- an effective written plan for the individual farm

Commodity associations are in varying stages of developing programs for OFFS. These national standards programs are managed by producer groups and are voluntary for most commodities. However, producers registered with the Egg Farmers of Alberta, the Alberta Turkey Producers or the Alberta Chicken Producers must comply with the requirements of their specific OFFS program to maintain their licence and quota.

The following OFFS programs are available in the poultry industry:

Commodity	OFFS Program	Commodity Association
Chicken	Safe, Safer, Safest	Alberta Chicken Producers
Egg	Start Clean – Stay Clean	Egg Farmers of Alberta
Turkey	On-Farm Food Safety Program	Alberta Turkey Producers

More information about these on-farm food safety programs is available on the websites of the commodity marketing boards. (See the websites listed in the Additional Resources section at the end of this booklet.)

# Legislation Affecting Slaughter and Processing

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## Slaughter

The *Food and Drugs Act* (FDA) is the main piece of federal legislation relating to food safety. The Act prohibits the sale of unsafe food products in Canada. All meat sold in Canada must comply with this legislation, regardless of where it is processed. Poultry must be slaughtered at either a provincially or a federally registered establishment.

All food sold in Canada must comply with the *Food and Drugs Act* and Regulations.

The federal *Meat Inspection Act* (MIA) regulates the import, export and interprovincial trade of meat products. The Act and the Meat Inspection Regulations deal with the registration of establishments, the inspection of birds and meat products in registered establishments as well as the standards for federally registered establishments and for birds slaughtered and meat products prepared in those establishments. Meat and by-products cannot be transported out of the country or to another province unless the product was inspected, handled and stored in federally registered facilities.

Poultry and poultry by-products cannot be transported to another province unless the product was inspected, handled and stored in federally registered facilities.

If the meat will only be sold within Alberta, the slaughter and processing can be done at a provincially registered facility. The *Meat Inspection Act* (Alberta) applies to all provincially licensed meat facilities. The Act regulates the slaughter, processing, preparing, packaging and storing of meat. It is illegal to sell or offer for sale uninspected meat.

Under the Act, you can sell, offer for sale, transport or deliver meat to any person who is not a member of your immediate household only if all the following criteria are met:

- poultry must be inspected by a veterinarian or other appointed person
- inspection must take place both before and after slaughter
- the slaughter must take place at an abattoir
- the carcasses must be found to be fit for consumption

Every shipment of birds, other than ostriches, rheas and emus, to a registered abattoir must be accompanied by a flock information sheet. This document shall include the following information:

- producer's name and address
- number of birds and crates shipped and the size of the crates
- identification of the flock by specifying the farm, barn and lot or flock number
- status and history of the health of the flock

- veterinary services, if any, that have been provided to the birds
- biosecurity management practices that have been implemented with the flock
- method of transport to the abattoir

Producers of ratites (ostriches, rheas and emus) must provide the abattoir with a written statement indicating that the bird has or has not been implanted with an electronic identification device (EID). If the bird has been implanted with an EID, you must inform the abattoir of the location of the implant, the type of implant and the type of scanner that is most likely to detect the implant. The EID must be removed from the carcass.

The provincial Meat Inspection Regulation (Alberta) allows a mobile butcher to slaughter your own birds on your premises or assist you in slaughtering your poultry on your premises, but this meat can only be used by you or members of your immediate household. This meat cannot be sold, bartered or given away.

You cannot sell your livestock including poultry and have customers conduct the slaughter at your farm.

All meat approved for sale at provincially licensed facilities must carry an Alberta Approved Inspection Legend. The Inspection Legend may be placed directly on the carcass or meat or on the packaging. When the carcass is too small for a stamp (for example, poultry), a tag with the inspection legend printed on it can be used. The Inspection Legend is unique to each licensed meat facility and must contain the number assigned to the facility.



Figure 1. The “Alberta Approved” Inspection Legend

Ritual or religious slaughter can be conducted at a licensed abattoir provided the following conditions are met:

- an experienced individual performs the slaughter
- the operator of the abattoir has permission to conduct such a slaughter
- the animal is handled and slaughtered with minimum pain and distress

## Egg Grading

The *Canadian Agricultural Products Act (CAPA)* is a trade and commerce act with regulations pertaining to numerous agricultural products including eggs. The Act provides national standards and grades for agricultural products, their inspection and grading, the registration of establishments and the standards governing these establishments.

The Egg Regulations stipulate the requirements for grading eggs and egg grades. In grading eggs, the factors of interior quality, weight, cleanliness and shell construction are considered. Grading of eggs can only occur at registered egg stations, which are inspected by the CFIA.

“Grading” an egg is different from “candling.” Candling is an examination of the interior condition of an egg by rotating the egg in front of or over a light source and is one component of the grading process. A “candled” egg is not a graded egg and cannot be sold as such.

## Processing

### **Poultry Meat Products**

Requirements for processed meat products are governed by the federal and provincial *Meat Inspection Acts* and their Regulations, the *Food and Drugs Act* (FDA) and Regulations and the provincial Food Regulation under the *Public Health Act* (Alberta). Under the FDA, you are prohibited from selling meat that fits any of the following criteria:

- has in or on it any poisonous or harmful substance
- is unfit for human consumption
- consists in whole or in part of any filthy, putrid, disgusting, rotten, decomposed or diseased animal or vegetable substance
- is adulterated
- was manufactured, prepared, preserved, packaged or stored under unsanitary conditions

Primary processing, which includes cutting and boning and further processing, such as curing, cooking, smoking, fermenting and grinding, can only be done in licensed or permitted meat facilities. Meat handled in provincially licensed/permitted facilities can only be sold in Alberta.

The processing (for example, curing, smoking, drying, sausage making, etc.) of any inspected meat on your farm intended for sale at other than an Alberta approved farmers’ market requires a permit from Alberta Health Services (AHS). You should contact the public health inspector in your area in the early stages of planning your meat business to discuss requirements. Meat facilities must be approved by AHS before you can begin operating.

If you wish to market your meat or meat products in other provinces your products must be processed in a federally registered facility. A list of federally registered meat facilities is available on the CFIA website.

If you wish to market your meat or meat products in other provinces, your products must be processed in a federally registered facility.

The Uniform Meat Cut Nomenclature System (UMCNS) specifies, within the federal Meat Cuts Manual, the common names for meat cuts that must be used in labelling all meat cuts for all bird species. The primary objective of the UMCNS is to ensure that all meat that is cut and offered for sale is properly identified in a meaningful and uniform way. The UMCNS is not intended to restrict acceptable meat cutting practices.

UMCNS recognizes that other cutting methods exist and are allowed provided that the meat is properly identified in accordance with the common names and definitions contained in the Meat Cuts Manual. The definitions in the manual establish limits within which these cut names may be used.

The CFIA has produced a manual of Meat Hygiene Procedures that contains information covering the preparation of poultry meat products, such as cooking and cooling temperatures and handling of ready-to-eat meat products. Although the manual applies to federally registered establishments, processors should follow the recommended practices to reduce the risk of food safety hazards.

The federal Food and Drug Regulations (FDR) and the Meat Inspection Regulations (MIR) address the requirements for processed poultry meat products. The legislation defines a variety of meat products, for example, sausage and preserved meat (cured, smoked, etc.), and the standards for permitted fillers, additives and preservatives that can be used. The Regulations also specify how much meat and protein must be present in various named processed meats such as wieners.

The MIR also defines the maximum amount of fat that can be present in ground meats, including poultry, as follows:

- extra lean ground – maximum 10 per cent fat
- lean ground – maximum 17 per cent fat
- medium ground – maximum 23 per cent fat
- regular ground – maximum 30 per cent fat

## **Eggs**

The provincial Purchase and Sale of Eggs and Processed Egg Regulation under the *Livestock and Livestock Products Act* allows ungraded eggs to be sold directly to end consumers only. Ungraded eggs cannot be sold, given or bartered to an intermediary who uses them as an ingredient in products that will then be sold to consumers. Graded eggs must be used to produce processed products such as pickled eggs or any baked good that will be sold at any marketing venue including farmers' markets.

The provincial Purchase and Sale of Eggs and Processed Egg Regulation under the *Livestock and Livestock Products Act* allows ungraded eggs to be sold directly to end consumers only.

Processed speciality egg products such as hard-boiled eggs sold whole, pre-peeled, wedged, sliced, chopped or pickled can be prepared in a home kitchen if the product will be sold only at Alberta approved farmers' markets. The provincial Food Regulation stipulates that if you plan to sell your processed egg products at public markets or any other marketing channel, you require a food handling permit and must prepare your products in an approved facility using food from approved sources.

Alberta Health Services considers poultry and egg products to be high risk foods. If you are intending to sell such products at any venue you must review your food preparation procedures with Alberta Health Services prior to selling the products

# Legislation Affecting Marketing

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## Labelling

The food label is one of the most important ways of communicating product information to your customers. It is also one of the main sources of information buyers use to make informed purchasing decisions.

A label as defined in the federal *Meat Inspection Act* includes any legend, word, mark, symbol, design, imprint, stamp, brand, ticket or tag or any combination thereof that is or is to be applied or attached to, or included in, or that accompanies or is to accompany any meat product, package or animal.

Detailed information about general label requirements can be found in the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) publication *Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – Food Labels*, Agdex 844-2. This poultry publication focuses on specific requirements for the labelling of poultry and poultry products that are in addition to the general labelling requirements.

### **Poultry Meat**

Federal legislation does not require grade information to appear on the label of prepackaged poultry or cuts of poultry meat or in advertising. Under the *Canada Agricultural Products Act* (CAPA), grade names are a protected national trade mark. Anyone other than a grader is prohibited from applying or using a grade or any design that resembles a grade stamp to market their meat.

Poultry grading applies only to chicken, turkey, duck, goose or guinea fowl. Grading is not required for farm direct meat sales in Alberta.

The *Food and Drugs, Consumer Packaging and Labelling* and *Meat Inspection Acts* and their Regulations set out specifications for mandatory label information:

- common name of the product
- net quantity in metric units
- dealer (processor or producer) name and mailing address
- list of ingredients in descending order of amount
- allergen labelling
- nutritional labelling unless exempt
- storage instructions including durable life date
- Meat Inspection Legend
- bilingual labelling unless exempt

### **Common Name**

Federal legislation requires all dressed poultry carcasses and cuts of poultry meat to be identified on labels with proper common names. The name of the bird species from which the meat is derived is required to appear in the product description, for example, turkey breast or chicken wings.

All dressed chicken and duck carcasses and cut-up chicken and duck portions containing kidneys must be labelled with the term “may contain kidneys.” This declaration is part of the product



description and must be shown as part of it on the main panel of bags, packages and any other retail package. The declaration shall have a minimum type height lettering of 1.6 mm (1/16 inch). Terms like “skinless” or “boneless” may be used to describe poultry cuts provided they are informative and not misleading.

Federal legislation has established a naming system for finger foods. Products made from a solid piece of poultry meat may use such terms as “nuggets, fingers, etc.” as part of the product name without further qualifications, for example, “Chicken Nuggets.”

Products made from chopped and formed meat may use such terms as “nuggets, fingers, etc.” as part of the product name provided a qualifying statement describing such process is shown as part of the product name, for example, “Chicken Nuggets, chopped and formed.” If the products are made from chopped meat and contain fillers, a descriptive name must immediately follow, for example, “Nugget Shaped Chicken Burgers”; otherwise, the product name must fully describe the product.

If the poultry products are breaded, that is, coated with a combination of batter and bread or cracker crumbs, the products must be labelled as “breaded,” for example, “Breaded Chicken Nuggets.”

The FDR and MIR establish composition and labelling requirements for poultry meat products to which phosphate salts and/or water have been added. These regulations establish minimum meat protein content and labelling requirements that enable consumers to make price and quality comparisons based on meat protein declarations.

When phosphate salts and/or water have been added to a poultry meat product, their addition must be reflected in the common name of the product, unless the product is cured, preserved or prescribed in Schedule I of the MIR. The use of the term “seasoned” in conjunction with the product’s name is acceptable when phosphate salts alone or with water have been added, for example, “Seasoned Turkey Breast.” The term “seasoned” is also acceptable on a label when spices are added with water. However, if only water is added, then an expression such as “water added” must be part of the product’s common name.

The label of these prepackaged meat products must also have a statement of the “% meat protein” as part of the common name of the product on the principal display panel of the package. The common name and percentage protein must be grouped together on the label with no information between them, for example, “Seasoned Chicken Wings - 13% minimum meat protein.”

The type must be at least as legible and conspicuous as any other type on that display panel and in letters that are a minimum of half the size of the letters used in the rest of the common name of the product. The type height cannot be less than 1.6 mm (1/16 inch) in height. Statements such as “minimum meat protein XX%” or “meat protein XX%” are acceptable.

### **Net Quantity**

The net quantity of a poultry meat product must be shown in metric units. When the net quantity is shown in both metric and Canadian units (Imperial), the metric units should be declared first and the two must be grouped together on the label with no information between them.

The net quantity shall reflect the actual quantity of meat and not include the weight of any water, brine or vinegar that is packed with the meat. A minimum type height of 1.6 mm (1/16 inch), based on the lowercase letter “o,” is required for all information in the net quantity except for the numerals that are to be shown in bold face and type size that is proportional to the principal display panel.

The MIR establishes limits on the percentage weight increase allowed in poultry carcasses as a result of washing, chilling or other contact with water. The allowable percentage varies with the type of poultry and original weight. The amount of water added and retained in a raw, single ingredient poultry cut must be declared as part of the product name on the principal display panel of prepackaged products.

### **Dealer Name and Address**

Either the complete name and address of the business that prepares the meat product or the words “prepared for” before the name and address of the firm for whom the meat product is produced or labelled must appear on the label of meat products.

### **List of Ingredients**

All the ingredients and their components (ingredients of ingredients) of a meat product must be listed in descending order of proportion by weight as measured before they are combined to make your product. Water and smoke are considered as ingredients and must be listed. Ingredients must be declared by their common names in the list of ingredients on a food label.

Water and smoke are considered “ingredients” in a poultry meat product and must be listed on the food label.

Water absorbed by poultry carcasses during the post-slaughter chilling process is not considered to be an ingredient providing the amount of moisture picked up does not exceed the prescribed tolerances. However, when water is added as an ingredient to previously chilled poultry, the resulting product is subject to the minimum protein standard and the additional labelling requirements mentioned above.

A filler may be listed as an ingredient, followed by a listing of all the components between parenthesis, for example, filler (wheat flour, skim milk powder, etc.), or the components making up the filler may be listed individually as ingredients.

If the product is breaded, toasted wheat crumb must be listed as the ingredient. Toasted wheat crumb is made by cooking dough prepared with flour and water, which may be unleavened or yeast leavened. The components of this ingredient do not have to be declared in the ingredient listing when it is added to a poultry meat product. However, any allergens in the toasted wheat crumb must still be declared.

### **Allergens**

Ten substances have been identified as most frequently associated with food allergies and allergic-type reactions. Here are the substances, often referred to in Canada as priority food allergens:

- eggs
- milk
- mustard
- peanuts
- seafood (including fish, crustaceans and shellfish)
- sesame seed
- soy
- sulphites
- tree nuts
- wheat and other cereal grains containing gluten

You are required to include these allergens in the list of ingredients on the labels of poultry products when they are present as ingredients or components. Processors must pay special attention to ingredients that are added through the use of mixtures and preparations (for example, flavouring and seasoning preparations).

Where priority food allergens may inadvertently be present in a food, a precautionary statement must be used following the ingredient list. Examples of precautionary statements:

- “may contain X”
- “not suitable for consumption by persons with an allergy to X” where X is the name by which the food allergen is commonly known

Precautionary statements must be truthful and clear and are not a substitute for good manufacturing practices.

When an allergen is likely to be present in a product, the use of a precautionary statement is not acceptable, and the presence of the allergenic ingredient must be accurately declared on the label. For example, it would be acceptable to use a “may contain wheat” statement on a chicken burger product where the product is processed on the same piece of equipment as another product and where there may be a possible transfer of wheat to the final product. It would not be acceptable to have a “not suitable for consumption by persons with an allergy to wheat” statement on a turkey sausage label when bread crumbs have been used to make the sausage.

A precautionary statement is not allowed on a label for a product that sometimes contains a food allergen ingredient and sometimes does not; the allergen ingredient must be declared.

### **Nutrition Labelling**

A nutrition facts table is required on poultry with added phosphates and/or water. The FDR exemption for raw, single ingredient meats does not apply to poultry meats with phosphates and/or water added. Prepackaged ground meats and ground meat by-products must always carry a nutrition facts table.

### **Storage Instructions**

All consumer and bulk containers used with edible meat products must be labelled with storage instructions unless the meat contained is one of the following shelf-stable types:

- commercially sterile meat products in cans, jars or pouches (excluding pasteurised products)
- dried meat products with a water activity ( $a_w$ ) value of 0.85 or less
- meat products that have a pH value of 4.6 or lower
- meat products packed in a 100% brine solution
- fermented meat products that have a pH level of 5.3 or less and an  $a_w$  of 0.90 or less – the pH of 5.3 or less is achieved at the end of the fermentation period

All edible meat products not considered to be shelf stable must be labelled with storage instructions that consist of one of the following statements: “keep refrigerated” or “keep frozen,” whichever is applicable.

Storage instructions for poultry meat products must be clear so customers know to “keep refrigerated” or “keep frozen.”

If the MIR applies, the storage instructions shall be shown on the principal display panel. The instructions may appear on any part of the label, except the bottom, for products from a provincially licensed facility.

The words “previously frozen” must appear on the principal display panel or on an adjacent sign if frozen, single ingredient poultry meat and its by-products have been thawed prior to sale.

The words “best before” and “meilleur avant” followed by the durable life date must appear on the label of a prepackaged poultry product where the durable life of the poultry meat product is 90 days or less.

All poultry meat products produced in federally registered facilities shall be labelled with the production date or with a code identifying the production lot. This code or date of production must appear on the immediate container of prepackaged meat products or on a tag attached to it.

Poultry products produced in provincially inspected facilities are required to record the production date or lot code. This coding system allows you to document the amount of product produced and trace products in the event of a recall.

### **Meat Inspection Legend**

All labels used on meat products produced in a registered establishment must include the Meat Inspection Legend. The “Alberta Approved” Inspection Legend is used to identify meat produced in a provincial meat establishment and is applied at the abattoir. The Legend indicates that the meat has been inspected and is approved for sale within the province.

The Inspection Legend may be applied directly to the meat product as a stamp or placed on the packaging. If the carcass is too small for a stamp, for example, guinea fowl, a breast tag with the Legend printed on it can be used.

### **Bilingual Labelling**

All mandatory information on food labels must be shown in both official languages except for the name and principal place of business of the company or person who produced or processed the product. This information can be in either English or French.

There is also an exemption for bilingual requirements for some farm direct products considered to be local products. A local product means a prepackaged product that is produced or processed and sold only in two possible locations:

- the municipality in which it is processed or produced
- one or more municipalities immediately adjacent to the one in which it is produced or processed

### **Eggs**

The requirements for packaging and labelling eggs graded in a registered facility are set out in the federal Egg Regulations, Food and Drug Regulations and the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Regulations.

Eggs can be sold in a carton (container holding not more than 30 eggs), a box (contains 15 dozen eggs) or a case (contains 30 dozen eggs). All packaging material must be clean, dry and strong enough to protect the eggs with no deleterious effect on the eggs.

The mandatory markings on a container must be clearly legible, either printed, stamped or stenciled. All mandatory information as well as nutrient content claims must be shown in both official languages. The size of the mandatory markings is prescribed in the legislation.

The top of the carton must state the common name and grade. The grade name must conform to the official design with the grade shown inside the outline of a maple leaf. The size of the egg (for

example, large, medium, etc.) must be marked in close proximity to the maple leaf. The egg count (number of eggs) must also be printed on the top of the carton.

The name and principal place of business of the egg station or business for which the eggs were packed must be declared. This information can be on any outside panel of the carton except the bottom. Every carton of graded eggs must include the producer premises code. The producer premises code is a combination of letters, symbols and numbers that identifies the premises of a producer from which the eggs came.

The best before date and storage instructions can appear on any outside panel other than the bottom. The “best before” date is the date before which there has been no appreciable deterioration in the quality of the eggs since they were packaged and displayed for sale, providing that the eggs are kept under satisfactory conditions.

All eggs sold in Canada are required to display the nutrition facts table (NFT). For eggs, the serving size is 1 <size> egg. The NFT must include information on calories and the 13 core nutrients. The 13 core nutrients must always appear in the same order within the table, even if the nutrient amount is zero.

The Egg Farmers of Canada (EFC) has developed nutrient data for different sized eggs. These values are permitted for use on egg cartons, but cannot be used on labels of eggs that have had their nutrient content modified by feed, such as omega-3 eggs. In such cases, any additional nutrients that are a subject of nutrient content claims must also appear in the NFT.

The provincial Purchase and Sale of Eggs and Processed Egg Regulation allows uninspected, ungraded eggs to be sold only by the producer directly to the end consumer. These eggs can be sold in recycled egg cartons provided the cartons are clean and free of contaminants. You must also cover up the grade and the name of the grading station.

The carton must be conspicuously labeled with the word “UNINSPECTED” in letters that are at least 2 centimetres in height. Cartons must also be labelled with the producer’s name and address.

## Label Claims

A claim is any statement, image or advertising that states, suggests or implies that a food product has particular qualities relating to its origin, nutritional properties, composition, processing, nature or any other quality. There are very specific conditions that must be met if you are going to make any type of claim about your meat product.

According to the *Food and Drugs Act (FDA)* and Regulations, you cannot process, sell, label, package or advertise any food in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an incorrect impression regarding its character, value, quantity, composition, merit or safety. The *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act (CPLA)* prohibits you from applying a label to any prepackaged food product for sale or advertising that contains false or misleading information relating to the product.

Additional information about food claims and the types of claims that can be made about food products, such as organic, can be found in the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) publication *Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – Food Claims*, Agdex 844-3.

This poultry publication focuses on additional requirements for claims specific to poultry and poultry products.

The use of the term “air chilled” is permitted for poultry refrigerated this way. However, you need to prove that there is no moisture gain as a result of post evisceration washing, chilling and drainage. Claims such as “no water absorption” or “no added water” or similar phrases are not acceptable.

The claims “lean” and “extra-lean” may only be used on foods meeting the definition in the Food and Drug Regulations for poultry. In order to make the statement that a poultry product is lean, the meat cannot be ground, and it must contain 10 per cent or less fat. To make the claim that meat is “extra lean,” the meat must not be ground and must contain 7.5 per cent or less fat.

Note that the above definitions of “lean” and “extra lean” do not apply to ground meats, which are subject to the standards for ground meats as outlined in the Processing section above. Ground meat must be identified by one of the following claims, depending on the fat content: regular, medium, lean or extra-lean.

Ground meats are subject to different standards for fat content than those for other meats, meat by-products, prepared meat and prepared meat by-products.

The use of superlatives such as “First Choice” or “Best Quality” in the name of a poultry product is only acceptable if the superlative is preceded by the name of the firm manufacturing the meat product or by the name of the firm for which a meat product is prepared. For example, “A.B.C. Farms Best Quality Chicken Wieners” is acceptable whereas “Best Quality Chicken Wieners” is unacceptable as a name.

Descriptions such as “100% Turkey Sausage,” “All Chicken Sausage” or “Pure Chicken Brats” are acceptable provided the meat product ingredients come exclusively from the animal species indicated. If making this type of claim for sausages, the source of the casing must also comply with the statement. For instance, when claiming “100% Turkey Sausage,” you cannot use a natural casing derived from any other animal species. However, an edible collagen casing or any other artificial casing is acceptable.

In the case of meat patties, the modifiers such as “100%” or “Pure” are acceptable for use in the product name if the following two conditions apply:

- the meat product ingredients come only from animal species indicated
- the qualifying phrase “with seasoning added” appears in close proximity to the product name

For example, “Pure Chicken Patties with Seasoning Added” or “100% Chicken Burgers with Seasoning Added” are acceptable statements. These modifiers are permitted only for sausages and patties and not for other poultry products.

The use of the term “fresh” is subject to the prohibitions in the FDA and CPLA. “Fresh” can be used to describe the nature or the age of a food, or it may be used as part of a trade name or brand name.

The term “fresh” can only be used on egg cartons if accompanied by the statement that all eggs are fresh. You cannot imply that one brand of eggs is more fresh than the others. Examples of acceptable claims:

- all eggs are fresh
- like all eggs, these eggs are fresh

Examples of unacceptable claims:

- super fresh eggs
- PQR Farms – the freshest eggs

Other similar terms such as “from the farm to you” or “direct from the farm” are permitted on egg cartons only if they are factual (that is, the eggs moved directly from the farm to the market).

Claims referring to production methods must follow the guidelines in the FDA and the CPLA. If such a claim is made, you must develop the production protocols to ensure the integrity of the claim.

A “no hormones” claim by itself on poultry or an egg carton cannot be used as it is considered misleading under the FDR because it implies that similar products may have come from poultry that received hormones. The use of hormones is not allowed in poultry in Canada. A “no hormones” claim can be made as long as it is accompanied by a statement explaining that the use of hormones is not permitted in poultry in Canada. The statement must be placed close to the claim.

## Retail Sales

The *Alberta Public Health Act* and Food Regulation (FR) govern establishments in the province where food intended for public consumption is handled. Food manufacturers, food distributors, grocery and farm stores, food vehicles, restaurants, caterers, farmers’ markets, public markets and other food establishments come under this Regulation.

Commercial food establishments are required to have a food handling permit and follow the Food Regulation as well as the Food Retail and Foodservices Code. Selling your poultry and poultry products through an on-farm store requires that your operation has a valid permit that must be renewed annually and may be subject to an annual fee.

The Food Regulation outlines basic requirements regarding the construction, maintenance and operation of permitted facilities. Establishments must be approved by Alberta Health Services (AHS) prior to operation; therefore, you should contact your public health inspector or environmental health officer in the early stages of planning your food business to discuss requirements.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with all applicable legislation, which includes zoning bylaws and building, fire, electrical, plumbing, ventilation and licensing codes. Whether you are starting a new business or altering an existing one, AHS will need to approve the building plans and specifications before construction begins. If you open a food business before getting Alberta Health Services approval and a valid business licence, legal action against you may be the result.

According to various provincial acts and regulations, if you do not have quota, you only can sell your products from your farm or at the farmers' market directly to the end consumer. Sales to any intermediary, such as restaurants or care facilities, are not allowed.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with all applicable legislation.

### **Poultry Meat**

If you sell your inspected meat at Alberta approved farmers' markets only, you do not require a food handling permit from Alberta Health Services. If you intend to sell your meat at the farm gate, in public markets, to restaurants and institutions or online, you will require a food handling permit for the storage and transport of the meat to your customers.

Poultry meat intended for sale must be stored in a separate refrigerator or freezer. It may not be stored with the family's personal food. The freezer must be kept in an area that is clean and free of rodents and any potential food safety hazards. Frozen meat products must be stored at a temperature that will keep the products frozen.

Frozen meat must be kept frozen during transport. When storing or transporting fresh product, it must be chilled and kept at a temperature of 4°C or cooler.

The vehicle used to transport the meat to market or your customers also falls under the food handling permit. It should be thoroughly cleaned prior to loading for each market. Hazardous materials and pets should never be in the vehicle used to transport food products.

Food safety training is mandatory when operating a commercial food establishment. If you have five or fewer food handlers, the individual responsible for the care and control of the establishment must have successfully completed a recognized food sanitation and hygiene training program. If six or more staff are working on the premises at any time, then at least one onsite supervisor must be trained. If you are selling your meat products only at an Alberta approved farmers' market, you are required to complete the Farmers' Market Food Safety Home Study Course.

### **Eggs**

Eggs cannot be transported from one province to another unless they have been graded. Ungraded eggs may be transported interprovincially if they are packed in containers bearing the words "Ungraded Eggs" and are being shipped to a registered processed egg station or registered egg station in the other province.

According to the provincial Purchase and Sale of Eggs and Processed Egg Regulation, uninspected, ungraded eggs can be sold directly to consumers for their own personal use provided that the eggs meet the following conditions:

- are produced on the producer's own farm
- must be for the consumer's own or household consumption only
- cannot be purchased/acquired for resale
- are clean and have no visible cracks or leaks
- are packed in clean containers that are conspicuously and legibly marked with the word "UNINSPECTED" in letters that are at least 2 centimetres in height



Ungraded eggs cannot be sold to chefs for use in their restaurants, to caterers for use in their catering businesses, to owners of bed and breakfasts for use in their breakfasts or to bakers at the farmers' market who will use them as an ingredient in their baking destined for sale at the farmers' market.

Eggs must be stored and transported at a holding temperature not exceeding 7°C. If you are selling your eggs at a farmers' market, the eggs should not be sitting out on the table because the ambient air temperature is too warm. One carton can be displayed to attract customers' attention, but the eggs for sale should be held in a cooler that can maintain the cool temperatures. Eggs in an open refrigeration unit can be displayed provided the air temperature around the eggs is less than 7°C.

## **Additional Resources**

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All federal legislation can be found on the website for the federal Department of Justice at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng>

**Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)**

Alberta North Office  
(north of Innisfail/Bowden)  
Tel: 780-395-6700

Alberta South Office  
(south of Innisfail/Bowden)  
Tel: 403-299-7680

CFIA has developed the Industry Labelling Tool, a food labelling reference. This tool replaces the Guide to Food Labelling and Advertising and provides consolidated, reorganized and expanded labeling information. The tool can be found on the CFIA website at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/eng/1383607266489/1383607344939>

Alberta's provincial legislation is available to view or print for free on the website for the Queen's Printer at <http://www.qp.alberta.ca>

**Alberta Health Services ([www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp))**

The general contact numbers for Alberta Health Services Zone offices:

North Zone, Environmental Public Health  
Grande Prairie – Tel: 780-513-7517

Edmonton Zone, Environmental Public Health  
Edmonton – Tel: 780-735-1763

Central Zone, Environmental Public Health  
Red Deer – Tel: 403-356-6366

Calgary Zone, Environmental Public Health  
Calgary – Tel: 403-943-8053

South Zone, Environmental Public Health  
Lethbridge – Tel: 403-388-6689

**Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development ([www.agriculture.alberta.ca](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca))**

For toll-free calls in Alberta to Government of Alberta offices, dial 310-0000, followed by the area code and the telephone number.

For information on other publications available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, go to [www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications) or call 780-427-0391 (toll-free: 1-800-292-5697).

## **Additional Resources (continued)**

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Alberta Ag-Info Centre provides access to specialists, information and services within Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. Toll-free in Alberta: 310 FARM (310-3276)

### **Animal Health and Laboratories Division**

Chief Provincial Veterinarian

Tel: 780-408-8345

Animal Health Branch

Tel: 780-427-6535

Inspection and Investigation Branch

Tel: 403-755-1474

### **Environmental Stewardship Division**

Agri-Environmental Management Branch

Tel: 780-422-4844

### **Food Safety and Animal Welfare Division**

Meat Inspection Branch

Tel: 780-422-2104

Safe Food and Animal Welfare Branch

Tel: 780-427-4054

### **Livestock Research and Extension Division**

Livestock and Farm Business Branch

Tel: 780-968-6556

Traceability Branch

Tel: 780-643-1572

### **Rural Development Division**

Farmers' Market Program

Tel: 780-853-8223

### **Quality Assurance Programs – Animal welfare and food safety**

Alberta Chicken Producers ([www.chicken.ab.ca/](http://www.chicken.ab.ca/))

Egg Farmers of Canada ([www.eggfarmers.ca](http://www.eggfarmers.ca))

Turkey Farmers of Canada ([www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca](http://www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca))