

Frequently asked questions:

Meat Inspection

Regulation amendments

How will the amendments help people in urban areas buy meat straight from a farm?

For example, you can now purchase a live cow, chicken or goat from a rancher, have it slaughtered and processed on the farm, then take all that animal's meat home for your family's use.

Why were these amendments introduced?

These changes make it possible for Albertans to get their meat straight from a farm and they enable ranchers and butchers in Alberta to make more money doing what they love.

On-farm Slaughter

Does a livestock producer require a license for on-farm slaughter?

A livestock producer will need an On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence if they want to sell their animal to a customer and allow that customer to have the animal slaughtered on-farm.

They do not need a licence if they slaughter only their livestock, on their land, for consumption by their own household.

How much will the licence cost?

Mobile Butcher and On-Farm Slaughter Operation licences are \$100 each and are valid for five years.

What services can a livestock producer provide once they have an On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence?

A customer can purchase an animal from a livestock producer and have that animal slaughtered on-farm. As the licence holder, the livestock producer can slaughter the animal themselves, hire a mobile butcher or allow the customer to slaughter their own animal.

The licence also permits options for processing the animal carcass. A customer can take the animal carcass and process the meat at home, have the animal carcass processed on-farm by the producer or request that a butcher shop process the animal carcass.

For example, a livestock producer may have a customer purchase a couple of sheep, the customer slaughters the animals themselves and takes the animal carcasses home right away. As the licence holder, the livestock producer can allow these activities on-farm while ensuring that the animals are slaughtered humanely and that the carcass is kept in a safe and sanitary manner.

Another example, a livestock producer may have a customer purchase a hog and request that the carcass is broken down to meat cuts and sausages. The livestock producer may have the knowledge and skill to slaughter the animal humanely and have the equipment to safely process the meat on-farm. Alternatively, the livestock producer could hire a mobile butcher to slaughter the animal on farm and have the carcass transported to a butcher shop for processing.

Are there any recordkeeping requirements for on-farm slaughter?

Record keeping of on-farm slaughter activities is required, details of which are [available online](#).

Are there labelling requirements for uninspected meat?

Uninspected meat must include on its packaging;

- The label “Uninspected, not for sale”
- Name of the slaughter operation
- Slaughter date (day, month and year)

Can a customer have an on-farm slaughtered animal shipped to a provincially licensed abattoir for processing?

Yes. Storage and transportation must be conducted in a manner that prevents spoilage. The abattoir owner may refuse to accept the animal if they are not confident that these conditions have been met.

Is the amount sold limited on a “per customer” basis, or “per licence”?

The animal limit is on an annual, per-customer basis. For example, a customer can purchase a maximum of six cows per year. The limits are deemed to be a reasonable amount that one household could consume in a year. The limit serves as a mechanism to prevent illicit distribution. If, for example, one consumer was purchasing 60 cows per year, it would be a signal that they are distributing the meat through retail or foodservice, which is illegal under the Meat Inspection Regulation.

What are the limits per customer?

The annual limits per customer are six large red meat animals (e.g., six cows or two bison and four cows), 12 hogs, 12 sheep, 12 goats, 150 poultry or small animals such as rabbit (e.g., 150 chickens, 120 chickens and 30 turkeys, 100 chickens and 30 ducks and 20 rabbits).

What are the traceability/labelling requirements for producers and abattoirs?

Agriculture and Forestry (AF) licensed abattoirs are required to comply with the *Meat Inspection Act/Regulation*, the Meat Facility Standards (as per the regulation) and inspection requirements.

Producers are required to document the CCIA or CSIP Tag number, brand or tattoo for the animal and the consumer’s name, address and contact information. This information allows the province to know who purchased a particular animal from a particular producer and enables traceability if there is a disease or illness issue.

- Tracing forward - If an animal disease is traced back to a herd, Agriculture and Forestry (AF) is able to contact the purchaser/consumer of an animal from that herd.
- Tracing backward – If a consumer becomes ill, Alberta Health Services and AF are able to trace back from the consumer to the producer.

Why does an inspector need to be present at slaughter activities in an abattoir if they do not need to be present on-farm?

Slaughter and processing activities in an abattoir require antemortem and post mortem inspection to allow the meat to be sold. On-farm, animal owners are choosing to have their animal slaughtered without inspection and the meat from the animal is for their household consumption only. The meat from animals slaughtered on-farm is “uninspected, and not for sale”.

Why can't mobile butchers perform ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection?

Provincial meat inspectors have the required expertise and training to ensure animal welfare and food safety inspection oversight as per the *Meat Inspection Act* and the Meat Inspection Regulation. Mobile butchers hold a slaughter licence. A licensee performing slaughter cannot provide inspection oversight, as it would be a conflict of interest.

Can the meat from animals slaughtered on-farm be sold to a local restaurant?

Uninspected meat cannot be sold to a local restaurant. Animals slaughtered on-farm that pass ante-mortem inspection on-farm and post-mortem inspection performed in an abattoir with an inspector present can be sold to commercial food establishments (retail, wholesale, and restaurants), to individuals, or at farmers' markets. Local restaurants, grocers, farmers' markets, and other foodservice establishments are permitted and inspected by Alberta Health Services. Alberta Health, through its Food Regulation, regulates the sale of meat and meat products at retail and foodservice.

Can meat from animals slaughtered on-farm be donated to a food bank or other non-profit group?

Meat can be donated or shared with others if it has passed both ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection by a provincial meat inspector. Food banks or other non-profit organizations that distribute and or prepare food products must adhere to Alberta's Food Regulation. The donation of uninspected meat or poultry products is prohibited except for wild game received through the Hunters For Tomorrow Program.

What are the amendments' economic benefits for livestock producers?

It is anticipated that the ability to slaughter on-farm will increase farm-direct sales of animals as consumers would be able to purchase an animal and have it slaughtered on site for their own household's consumption. If the number of farms in Alberta that participate in direct marketing doubles to 10 per cent, that would equal approximately 4,000 farms participating in direct sales.

With the changes, producers would be expected to earn additional profit from selling their animals directly to consumers and doing the slaughter themselves. The producer would benefit from the sale price of the animal, as well as a fee for slaughtering and processing the carcass on-farm as additional sources of revenue.

Who inspects the facility where the on-farm slaughter will be taking place?

The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder does not require a facility to conduct on-farm slaughter. For example, slaughter can be completed in the field. Agriculture and Forestry is responsible for the oversight for conditions of the On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence.

What auditing system does this new licence have?

The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence is not subject to an audit system. The meat from an animal sold and slaughtered on-farm is uninspected, not for sale, for consumption by the animal owner's household. The animal owner is making a choice to consume uninspected meat.

What food safety checks and balances exist?

The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder must declare that they have read and understand their responsibilities under all applicable legislation, must submit quarterly reports to Agriculture and Forestry on number of animals slaughtered, dates of slaughter and the names and contact information of the consumers who purchased the animals. The reporting enables traceability and verification that a consumer is not purchasing more than their own household could reasonably consume.

The meat from an animal slaughtered on-farm is for the animal owner's household consumption only. It is illegal for the owner of the purchased animal to sell uninspected meat. This limits distribution and the risk of a foodborne illness outbreak.

Who evaluates the humane handling and slaughter of the animals?

Agriculture and Forestry's oversight will include periodic reviews and follow-up on complaints received from the public per established compliance principles. [Compliance Principles of Alberta Agriculture](#)

Who is liable if there is a health concern linked to this licence?

The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder is responsible for sanitary dressing, storage of the carcass and sanitary practices during processing.

If an On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder is linked to foodborne illnesses, Agriculture and Forestry would collaborate with Alberta Health Services to identify the root cause and take appropriate action.

What do the amendments mean for wild game?

Hunters are still able to take their carcasses to provincially licensed abattoir owners, mobile butcher facilities or On-Farm Slaughter Operations who perform custom processing. The meat remains uninspected and not for sale.

What are the disposal requirements for specified risk

The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder is responsible to comply with all other pieces of legislation, including the federal Enhanced Feed Ban. Further information on can be found on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's website. [Enhanced Animal Health Protection From BSE - Specified Risk Material \(SRM\)](#)

material (SRM) on-farm?

A permit is required for transporting and disposing of certain cattle tissues capable of transmitting bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), known as specified risk material (SRM). This allows the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to track and maintain continuous control over SRM, to ensure that it does not enter livestock feed, pet food or fertilizer.

What about brand inspectors and their requirements?

The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder is responsible to comply with all other pieces of legislation, including the *Livestock Identification and Commerce Act*.

If someone has an On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence and butchers a cow owned by someone else, can the butchered cow's owner sell separate portions from that one cow to multiple people?

No. It is illegal to sell uninspected meat. The meat from the cow is for the animal owner's immediate household only.

Does the customer need to be present on-farm for the slaughter?

No. The On-Farm Slaughter Operation Licence holder can conduct the slaughter without the customer on-site.

If an On-Farm Slaughter Operation contacts a Mobile Butcher to perform an on-farm slaughter, does the butcher need to ensure the operation has a proper licence?

While not technically required, it is in the butchers' best interest; otherwise, they could be found complicit in an illegal activity.

How does on-farm slaughter impact a poultry producer's quota?

The amendments will not change the requirements outlined in the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* or its respective regulations related to poultry production and sales, with the exception that the poultry may now be purchased "live" and slaughtered on-farm.

Chicken and turkey are part of a national supply-managed system, whereby producers must hold quota to participate in the market unless they produce below an exemption amount.

Requirements for exempted production are outlined in plan and marketing regulations. Exempted production enables production and marketing outside of the quota system and often is described as small-scale production or local food production.

On-farm slaughter is considered exempted production.

Can farmers sell uninspected meat?

The sale of uninspected meat in Alberta is illegal. These amendments allow for a farmer to sell an animal direct to a customer, have that animal slaughtered on-farm, and all of the meat from the animal goes to that same customer for their immediate household consumption. The meat cannot be sold, bartered or donated.

Video Ante-Mortem Inspection

Why are video inspections being allowed?

Starting in January 2022, in certain circumstances, government will allow a video inspection to take place before an animal is butchered. This will be helpful if an animal is unexpectedly injured, and needs to be euthanized but an inspector is not able to get there for awhile. Allowing video inspection will stop the animal from being in pain for any longer than necessary before it is butchered and sold.

Can a healthy, normal animal be inspected and slaughtered through video ante-mortem inspection?

This inspection service would be available to animals that are unfit for transport or in an emergency slaughter situation.

Why are the video ante-mortem inspection provisions being delayed?

Further testing and analysis are required to ensure the alignment of results between an in-person determination of the animal's fitness for slaughter and a remote assessment by video performed by an inspector.

If an animal has been subjected to video ante-mortem inspection, can I sell the meat?

If a government meat inspector performs ante-mortem inspection by video and the carcass is transported to a licensed provincial abattoir for post-mortem inspection by a meat inspector, it will be labelled as inspected and is available for sale. It can then be sold to restaurants, through retail, sold direct to the customer or processed further at a provincially licensed facility.

Meat By-Products

How will the amendments impact the use of the whole animal?

These amendments allow provincially-licensed butchers to use more of the animal by letting them sell the eyes and other organs. Less of the animal is wasted and butchers and ranchers can earn more money from the animals they raise.

We already sell meat and poultry by-products; what has changed?

The regulation has been amended to provide more clarity and support increased market access opportunities for abattoirs.

What are the economic benefits of expanding the salvage of meat by-products?

The value that can be salvaged from a beef carcass is estimated at approximately \$300. Based on the number of animals slaughtered in Alberta in 2019, the value is estimated at up to \$8.5 million. If we assume a 10 per cent increase in the salvage and sale of by-products, that would equate to nearly \$1 million in additional revenue for abattoir owners.