

Frequently asked questions:

Meat Inspection Regulation

General

Why were consumers not included in the consultation on the proposed changes to the *Meat Inspection Regulation*?

Consumers were not directly impacted by the regulation compliance provisions being contemplated, so were not included in the engagement.

Uninspected Slaughter

How are we balancing the desire for people to buy directly from farmers with the need to keep our meat safe?

To balance food safety with the opportunity for Albertans to buy directly from farmers, the amendments will allow for the purchase of an animal with the resulting meat products going to a single individual for household consumption. The further resale of that uninspected meat would remain prohibited.

While on-farm slaughter or field dressing is less hygienic than inside an abattoir, this process can be conducted safely as demonstrated by mobile butchers and hunters across the country every year.

Licensing requirements would help mitigate the risk of animal health concerns being missed, as well as improper specified risk material (SRM) disposal.

Food safety is a shared responsibility, and producers in the province are known for producing safe, high-quality food. It is anticipated that farmers will continue to be transparent and provide information to their customers on their animal husbandry and meat processing practices.

The other changes – video ante-mortem inspection, salvage and sale of meat by-products - received general support from all industry groups contacted.

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

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

How much will the licence cost?

The licensing fee for Mobile Butcher and Uninspected Slaughter Operation Licences are each \$100 and are valid for a five-year term.

Are there any recordkeeping requirements for on-farm slaughter?

Record keeping of on-farm slaughter activities will be required; details of the reporting requirements are available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/meat-inspection.aspx>.

Will there be a limit on the number of animals that can be slaughtered on-farm?

Agriculture and Forestry are addressing consumer demand for increased access to local meat without compromising food safety and animal welfare. Initial limits will apply to consumers and will accommodate the volume of meat an average Alberta family would consume in a year. Limits are 6 cattle, 6 pigs, 6 goats/sheep, and 150 poultry per year.

Are there labeling requirements for uninspected meat?

Yes, uninspected meat must include on its packaging the label “**uninspected, not for sale**”

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

Under the *Meat Inspection Regulation*, slaughter and processing activities in an abattoir require inspection services to provide oversight on food safety, animal welfare, animal diseases and to stamp the meat as “inspected”. Alberta’s *Food Regulation* requires that food products sold in retail or in a food establishment have been subjected to appropriate inspection.

The meat from animals slaughtered on-farm is “uninspected, and not for sale” and is for the animal owners’ consumption only.

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, inspection oversight cannot be provided by a licensee performing the slaughter, as it would be a conflict of interest.

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

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

Producers are required to document the RFID tag number for the animal and the name, address, and contact information for the consumer who purchased the animal. 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, 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.

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 video 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, farmer's 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 Who Care Program*.

For more information on Alberta's *Food Regulation*,
www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2006_031.pdf

Will these changes have 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%, 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.

I am a small livestock producer who is self-marketing beef and pork and I'd like to know how the changes to the regulation will allow me to butcher (by me or by a mobile butcher) and sell the meat to consumers.

Animals may be butchered under a Mobile Butcher Licence or an Uninspected Slaughter Operation Licence and the meat from the carcass is uninspected and belongs to the owner of that animal. It is for consumption by the animal owner's household only and cannot be sold, gifted, traded nor bartered to others.

If you would like to sell cuts of meat or portions of a carcass to consumers, then you will need to have your animals slaughtered and inspected at one of the provincially licensed facilities.

Video Ante-Mortem Inspection

When would it be beneficial for a producer to have a video ante-mortem inspection done?

An example of a situation where a video ante-mortem inspection would be done includes an animal with a broken leg that needs to be euthanized immediately on-farm. Waiting for an Appointed Inspector to arrive on-farm so that the ante-mortem inspection can be conducted and the carcass taken to a licensed abattoir for post-mortem inspection has been the practice but with video technology, we have an opportunity to improve the welfare of animals and the producer can potentially have some cost savings. Sixty-four per cent of producers and 54 per cent of abattoir operators surveyed indicated they would participate in video ante-mortem inspection.

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/Appointed Inspector.

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

Yes, if an Agriculture and Forestry Meat Inspector performs ante-mortem inspection by video and the carcass is transported to a licensed provincial abattoir for post-mortem inspection by an AF Meat Inspector, the meat will be labeled as inspected and is available for sale.

Meat By-Products

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

The regulation has been amended to provide more clarity and to 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 carcass is estimated at approximately \$300. Based on the number of animals slaughtered in Alberta in 2019, that equals a value of more than \$8.5 million. If we assume a 10% increase in the salvage and sale of by-products, that would equal nearly \$1 million in additional revenue for abattoir owners.