

# A Guide to Selling Meat and Poultry Products in Virginia

## Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) Office of Meat and Poultry Services

### What meat and poultry products need to be inspected by the VDACS Office of Meat and Poultry Services?

The production of meat or poultry products is required to be conducted under inspection unless an exemption allows otherwise. Exemptions still have requirements that must be met; it is not a complete exclusion from all inspection.

All “amenable” species i.e. Cattle, swine, sheep, goats and poultry (including ratites) slaughtered and offered for sale must be inspected. Ratites include ostrich, emu, and rheas. Products offered for wholesale must be manufactured from inspected and passed carcasses. Some poultry operations which slaughter and/or process poultry may be exempt from inspection if they meet the requirements for the type of exemption they claim.

Nonamenable species are livestock or poultry that do not require inspection under OMPS or USDA laws to sell the meat. However, regulatory oversight is still required for these species. Contact OMPS for assistance determining the appropriate office with jurisdiction. Producers of nonamenable species such as rabbits or bison may request voluntary inspection for their animals. This is a fee-based service and certain regulatory requirements must be met.

All meat and poultry products offered for sale require regulatory oversight. The flow chart provided at the end of this document can be used to determine the appropriate office to contact.

### Who can sell meat or poultry at farmers’ markets, to restaurants, to retail stores and on the internet?

Anyone who has had their products processed at a USDA/FSIS or VDACS OMPS inspected facility. You may be required to apply for a Meat Handlers Permit. Please contact OMPS **(804)-786-4569** for more information.

Persons or businesses inspected by the Virginia Department of Health and/or VDACS Office of Dairy and Foods may sell their products. Please contact your local inspector if you have further questions.

### How can I tell if products have been inspected?

Only meat and poultry products produced under a Federal or State Grant of Inspection will have labels with inspection legends that indicate the product was inspected. Products inspected under State Inspection cannot be sold across state lines. The number in the legend is specific to the facility where the product was produced.

Restaurants and caterers are inspected by the local Department of Health. Regulations require that only meat and poultry coming from an approved source (inspected) can be used in meals prepared by these businesses.

Retail stores are inspected by the Office of Dairy and Foods. Regulations require that all meat and poultry sold

at these locations must come from an approved source (inspected). The local health department may also inspect some retail businesses.

### **Do I need to have inspection to sell rabbit meat?**

Rabbit producers wanting to sell their products within the Commonwealth of Virginia to restaurants, retail stores, or wholesale are not required to apply to OMPS for a Voluntary Grant of Inspection. They may instead participate in the VA Rabbit Program. For program requirements and application, contact VDACS Office of Food and Dairy **(804) 786-3520**.

### **Can I sell meat harvested from hunting?**

Wild harvested game birds and animals cannot be sold for food. Only meat from domestic raised game birds and animals may be sold. For more information, contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries **(804) 367-1000**.

### **Can poultry be sold without inspection?**

There are specific exemptions to the Poultry Products Inspection Act that allow for individuals or firms to sell their poultry without undergoing inspection. While certain poultry operations may be conducted without inspection, you must meet other requirements such as sanitation and recordkeeping. The following statement should be on the labels of exempt poultry offered for sale, "Exempt P.L. 90-492". For more information on the poultry exemptions, please contact OMPS **(804) 786-4569**.

### **How can I get my facility inspected by OMPS?**

Before OMPS can provide inspection, you must meet regulatory requirements. The operator of the slaughter or processing facility must submit an application for a grant of inspection. By submitting the application, the operator is agreeing to follow all regulatory guidelines applicable to their operation. Basic requirements for a grant of inspection can be found at this link: <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/inspection.pdf>

### **What requirements does my facility need to meet to get inspection by OMPS?**

Facility requirements can be found in Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations. These regulations are generalized and may not address specifics for your type of operation. OMPS can provide basic guidance and consultation for the construction of processing and slaughter plants.

Regulations require a physical separation from living quarters. Therefore, to operate under a grant of inspection from your home, you must comply with this requirement.

### **I am not slaughtering livestock or offering products for wholesale, who provides inspection for my products?**

All meat, non-meat, poultry, and nonamenable species offered for sale as human food are regulated. Different government agencies may regulate these products depending on the type of food, where it is prepared or where it is consumed. The attached flow chart can be used to help make a determination of which office to contact depending on your type of business.

In order to determine the type of inspection your business may be subject to, ask yourself the question in the **bold type** and then follow the appropriate arrow. If you answer, “Yes” to more than one question your business may require inspection from more than one office.

**Do you provide a service by slaughtering and/or processing livestock for the owner of the livestock for their personal use?**

Yes

A Custom Permit of Exemption is required  
Contact the Office of Meat and Poultry Services (804) 786-4569

**Do you slaughter and/or process 1,000 - 20,000 birds annually and offer these for sale to household consumers, retail store(s), outlets(s) or to restaurants?**

Yes

A Poultry Permit of Exemption is required  
Contact the Office of Meat and Poultry Services (804) 786-4569

**Do you slaughter and/or process less than 1,000 birds of your own raising annually and offer these for sale to household consumers, retail store(s), outlets(s) or to restaurants?**

Yes

Contact the Office of Meat and Poultry Services (804) 786-4569 for requirements

**Do you slaughter livestock and further process carcasses then wholesale these carcasses or products?**

Yes

**Do you purchase meat products<sup>1</sup>, further process these products and then wholesale these products?**

Yes

**Do you slaughter over 20,000 birds annually and offer them for sale?**

Yes

Grant of Inspection is required  
Contact the Office of Meat and Poultry Services (804) 786-4569

**Do you engaged in business as a broker, distributor, or peddler of meat and/or poultry products. This includes persons or businesses, sell products at farmers markets, door-to-door sales, and wholesalers, and owners/operators of public warehouses where meat and poultry products in or for commerce are stored.**

Yes

You must be registered as a meat and poultry handler with either the Office of Meat and Poultry Services or USDA.  
Contact the Office of Meat and Poultry Services for more information (804) 786-4569

**Are you engaged in the business of buying, selling, transporting in commerce, or importing, any dead, dying, diseased or disabled cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, equines or poultry, whether intended for human food or other purposes?**

Yes

You must be registered as an inedible hauler with the Office of Meat and Poultry Services (804) 786-4569

**Are you engaged in the business of buying, selling, transporting in commerce, or importing, inedible parts and products of the carcasses of any animal or poultry?**

Yes

In order to determine the type of inspection your business may be subject to, ask yourself the question in the **bold type** and then follow the appropriate arrow. If you answer, “Yes” to more than one question your business may require inspection from more than one office.

**Do you purchase and prepare inspected livestock carcasses and/or inspected meat or meat products and sell products to consumers at your retail store(s) or outlet(s)?**

Yes

Contact the Office of Food and Dairy (804) 786-3520 and your local health department

**Do you purchase meat or meat products<sup>1</sup> and prepare the products as ready to eat entrees for meals sold directly to consumers?**

Yes

Are these meals packaged, labeled and chilled?

Yes

Contact the Office of Food and Dairy (804) 786-3520 and your local health department

N  
O

Restaurant  
Contact the local Department of Health Office

**Do you purchase meat or meat products<sup>1</sup>, prepare these products, and then sell them in meals as a catering business?**

Yes

Catering  
Contact the local Department of Health Office

**Do you purchase meat or meat products<sup>1</sup> and prepare them in a central kitchen for distribution as ready to eat meals or vending machines that you own/operate?**

Yes

Are these meals packaged, labeled and chilled?

Yes

Contact the Office of Food and Dairy (804) 786-3520 and your local health department

N  
O

Central Kitchen  
Contact the local Department of Health Office

<sup>1</sup>Must start with inspected and passed product or raw product prepared at a retail exempt store

Individuals considering selling meat and poultry products should:

- **Check** with your local city or county for zoning requirements.
- **Consider** writing a business plan or having someone help you write one before investing money on equipment and facilities.
- **Contact** OMPS to receive a directory of existing facilities. Some of these offer slaughter and processing services.

### **Helpful links for meat and poultry processors**

Business One Stop provides guidance to persons wanting to start, grow or expand a business

**[www.bos.virginia.gov](http://www.bos.virginia.gov)**

Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network provides guide to small-scale producers

**[www.nichemeatprocessing.org/get-started](http://www.nichemeatprocessing.org/get-started)**



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