

Behind the Legend

ISSUE NO. 1 Quarterly newsletter for Ontario's provincially licensed meat plant operators SEPT. 2010

The **meat inspection legend** is the stamp that goes on meat products when they have met all regulatory requirements and are deemed safe for Ontario consumers.



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INTRODUCING A NEW WAY OF COMMUNICATING WITH LICENSED MEAT PLANT OPERATORS

PROVIDING TIMELY INFORMATION TO OUR REGULATED CLIENTS

Welcome to the first issue of **Behind the Legend**, the new quarterly newsletter published exclusively for provincially licensed abattoir and freestanding meat plant operators in Ontario. Through this newsletter, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will provide answers to your questions and timely updates on meat inspection initiatives, programs, policies, regulations, laboratory testing, and other topics of interest.

We hope this newsletter will help you better understand food safety requirements, keep abreast of new developments and overall simplify meat inspection information. We look forward to your feedback, suggestions and questions.

Lee-Ann Walker
General Manager, Meat Inspection Program

Our Vision: **Leaders in meat inspection**

Our Mission:

To provide safe meat products for Ontario families through the delivery of risk-based meat inspection services at Ontario's provincially licensed meat plants.

- We will continue to evolve our program and educate our plant operators to serve the diverse consumer needs within our province.
- We will achieve this through recruiting, training and developing a high performing team.

Frequency of inspection now risk-based in freestanding meat plants

OMAFRA has fine-tuned the inspection frequency for freestanding meat plants (FSMPs) to better focus resources where they are most needed and to further enhance the overall safety of meat products processed in these plants.

The ministry followed the recommendations of Ontario's Auditor General to make sure that the meat inspection program focuses on plants that represent the highest risk to food safety while ensuring all are compliant with the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001.

Tying the frequency of inspections to the level of risk will allow meat inspectors to spend more time at meat plants that require more attention from a food safety standpoint.

A risk classification form allows the ministry to put each FSMP into a category based on its food safety risk (low to high). Factors taken into consideration include the type of processes conducted, products produced, physical characteristics of the plant, volume and distribution of product, level of knowledge and training of the operator and employees, process controls in place and compliance history.

The frequency of inspection will increase as risk increases. Tying the frequency of inspections to the level of risk will allow meat inspectors to spend more time at meat plants that require more attention from a food safety standpoint, while

maintaining sufficient inspector presence in plants that have a high level of food safety controls. As the frequency of inspections decreases, the time allotted for the inspection will increase to allow inspectors to perform all required inspection tasks.

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge the Ontario Independent Meat Processors' input and assistance in the development of the risk-based approach to inspection frequency.

Changes to barbecue hog testing reflect good industry practices



A study conducted by OMAFRA showed that the risk of sulfa drug contamination is very low in barbecue hogs less than 48 kg (105 lbs) dressed weight. To reflect the lower risk, adjustments have been made to the sulfa testing program in abattoirs.



The new process for this category of hogs came into effect on May 25, 2010. OMAFRA meat hygiene officers now collect samples at random. They do not hold sampled hogs pending test results, no longer conduct on-site sulfa testing and no longer use producer/plant category status to identify class of testing.

The ministry sent a letter outlining changes to all abattoir operators in April.

Contact: Mike Eastment, Residue Control Officer, michael.eastment@ontario.ca or 519-826-4247.

Operators' excellent track record in complying with the barbecue hog testing program over the past several years have allowed us to improve the program.



Licensing Term: We need your Feedback!

OMAFRA proposes to change the licensing term for meat plant operators from one year to three years.

Under the Meat Regulation, you are required to renew your licence every year and pay a fee of \$300. If proposed changes are approved, you would only be required to renew your licence once every three years for the same fee of \$300. This means a reduction in paperwork and in fees.

“Reg Talk”

What information do I need to include on my pre-packaged meat product label?

All pre-packaged foods require a label which must comply with five regulations. Basic information must include:

- Meat inspection legend
- Common name of product
- Net quantity
- Name and address of meat plant
- Complete list of ingredients (including allergens)
- Durable life date
- Product date or code

Please visit Ontario’s Regulatory Registry at www.ontariocanada.com/registry and select “Current Proposals” to review the proposed changes.

You can provide your comments and feedback through the Regulatory Registry or by contacting OMAFRA’s Agriculture Information Contact Centre at **1-877-424-1300** by September 22, 2010.

OMAFRA is proposing these changes as part of the Ontario government’s **Open for Business** initiative.

Send us your questions and we will provide answers in this column
See contact information on the back page

- Storage instructions
- Bilingual information (federal requirement)
- “Ready-to-cook” statement/cooking instructions, when applicable
- Percent protein, when applicable (federal requirement)
- Nutrition Facts table (federal requirement)

More details at www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/meatinsp/mi_label.htm

Changes to Meat Plant Audit Program

OMAFRA is making key changes to the Meat Plant Audit Program to make it more transparent and useful to you.

- As of September 1, 2010, we will be introducing a simplified rating system. The new ratings will be similar to the ones used for restaurants in several jurisdictions. Plants will be rated as a **Pass**, a **Conditional Pass** or a **Fail**.
- In early 2011, auditors will begin using a new scoring system to improve the consistency and transparency of a plant’s overall rating. All regulatory requirements observed during an audit have been ranked according to their impact on food safety. The plant’s overall rating will be reflected accordingly.

Additional information will be available on OMAFRA’s website in mid-September. For a printed version of the infosheet please call **1-877-424-1300**.

530

is the current
number of
provincially
licensed meat
plants in Ontario



Make sure you have a copy of the revised Meat Plant Guidelines

We revised and updated some of the Meat Plant Guidelines. A letter was sent in May explaining the changes.

If you would like to receive the update, please contact your area manager.

MEAT INSPECTION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

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For any inquiries regarding meat inspection, please contact your area manager. All area managers can be paged at: 1-800-263-1420. Please ask for your area manager by name.

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hear from
you!

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questions
and story
suggestions

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