

Behind the Legend

ISSUE NO. 2 Quarterly newsletter for Ontario's provincially licensed meat plant operators Dec. 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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Three-year licensing term now a reality

As part of the Ontario government's *Open for Business* initiative, OMAFRA has changed the frequency of licence renewal for meat plants from once every year to once every three years. This change will streamline the process for meat plants, reduce paperwork and save operators \$600 over three years.

This change does not affect OMAFRA's monitoring and enforcement of food safety requirements in meat plants in any way. Food safety is our number one priority, and our inspectors maintain their ongoing presence in all provincially inspected plants. All meat plants and abattoirs continue to be audited annually.

Regardless of the licensing term, a licence can be suspended or revoked during a hearing process or at any time. In addition, the director has authority to reduce the term of a licence based on past conduct of an operator and if it is in the public interest to do so (e.g. a significant food safety issue).

Changes to O. Reg. 31/05 (Meat) and O. Reg. 223/05 (Fees) under the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001 have been approved and will take effect January 1, 2011.

You should have received your licence renewal package in November. The package outlines how the change to the licensing term will be phased in over three years.

Thanks to operators who provided feedback during the consultation process.
Contact: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

This just in: Interprovincial Meat Trade Pilot Project

On December 6, 2010, the federal government announced the launch of a federal-provincial-territorial pilot project to help small- and medium-sized businesses meet federal meat hygiene requirements for interprovincial trade. Ontario provincially licensed meat plant operators interested in participating in the pilot should submit an application to OMAFRA by January 7, 2011. For more information visit : www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/meatinsp/fpt-meat-pilot.htm or contact the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300 or ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca.

Stronger staff protection from workplace harassment and violence — New requirements for employers

Everyone should be able to work without fear of violence or harassment, in a safe and healthy workplace. As of June 15, 2010, changes were made to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to strengthen protections from workplace harassment and workplace violence.

Ontario employers, regardless of the number of workers, are now required to:

- assess the risks of workplace violence that may arise from the nature of the workplace, the type of work or the conditions of work;
- have policies and programs in place for workplace violence and workplace harassment.

Employers must provide information and instruction to workers on the content of these policies and programs.

As employers, meat plant operators are responsible for the safety of not only their employees but the safety of OMAFRA inspectors working in their plants as well. A serious incident occurred recently in a provincially licensed meat plant, which highlighted the need for these safeguards to be in place.

For more information on the new requirements under the act, visit:
www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/workplaceviolence.php
(The guideline is listed in the resources section).

Contact: General Occupational Health and Safety Inquiries, Ministry of Labour, 1-877-202-0008

Everyone should be able to work without fear of violence or harassment, in a safe and healthy workplace.

New pest control protocol for meat plants

Rodent presence or activity inside a meat plant may lead to contamination of ingredients, packaging, food and food contact surfaces, and poses a significant risk to food safety. The Meat Inspection Program has developed and implemented a new pest control protocol to address this food safety risk.

The new protocol came into effect on August 20, 2010. It will maximize food safety and ensure a fair, consistent and timely approach will be taken by Meat Inspection staff in response to rodent presence or activity at provincially licensed meat plants.

The new pest control protocol will contribute to enhancing food safety and making the response to rodent presence or activity clear and more consistent.

The response outlined in the protocol is based on food safety risk. If at any point there is a risk to food safety, inspection staff will take compliance action to minimize this risk. The complete protocol has been included in the Meat Program Protocols (MPP) and has been made available to Meat Inspection staff.

The new pest control protocol will contribute to enhancing food safety and making the response to rodent presence or activity clear and more consistent.

For more information:
www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/meatinsp/pestcontrolpolicy.htm

Response to Ad Hoc Committee

In April of 2010, the “Ad Hoc Committee for the Concerned Abattoir and Stand Alone Meat Operators of Ontario” met with Assistant Deputy Minister Deb Stark to discuss the results of a survey of operators conducted by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

OMAFRA has met a number of times over the summer with this group led by Mr. Louis Roesch, to discuss the committee’s top concerns with some of the requirements under the Meat Regulation.

OMAFRA understands how important local abattoirs and meat plants are for livestock and poultry producers, and the local economy. We have thoroughly reviewed and researched all of the concerns brought up by the committee and addressed them within the limits of the Meat Regulation, adding flexibility without compromising food safety.

As part of this process the ministry has:

- Clarified and provided plain-language explanation of number of requirements
- Provided advice and tips for meeting these requirements
- Presented examples of simplified records and protocols
- Changed requirements for wall-floor junctions and coving in the Meat Plant Guidelines where there was

a discrepancy with the regulation

- Added some flexibility — based on scientific knowledge — to the use of wood in certain specific areas, under certain conditions
- Started publishing this newsletter quarterly (Behind the Legend)

In addition, the ministry is continuing ongoing efforts in improving consistency of inspection and audits across the province, and improving communications.

We are committed to continuing to work with, and support small, local abattoirs and meat plants while maintaining our shared commitment to food safety.

To read the ministry’s full response to concerns raised by the Committee, please visit:

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/meatinsp/adhoccommittee.htm

or contact 1-877-424-1300 to obtain a printed version.

In 2009-10, 96 per cent of meat plants audited met the minimum regulatory requirements, demonstrating compliance is achievable.

Achieving uniformity of inspections in operations across the province through training

In 2009, OMAFRA put into place a three-year training plan which provides direction for training of meat inspectors. One of the main objectives of the training plan is to achieve improved uniformity of inspections across the province.

Ontario’s meat inspectors receive comprehensive and rigorous training. The training is equivalent to, or exceeds, programs in other jurisdictions. Inspectors complete 12-15 days of classroom training and two distance education courses and spend approximately six months with a field trainer gaining on-the-job experience to acquire a thorough understanding of regulations, policies and practices.

Plans are underway as well to require that all certified staff attend technical training to refresh their skills. Among other things, they will be required to take the Meat Hygiene course and the Food Handler’s Training course every five years as a continuous requirement.

Formalized policy for smokehouses

OMAFRA has had minimum mandatory requirements in place for smokehouses as part of the general meat inspection standards. The Meat Plant Guidelines provide guidance on achieving compliance.

These minimum requirements have been reviewed and will be updated in a new policy that better describes the specific requirements. The formalized policy specific for smokehouses will be in place in early 2011. Watch for an update in the first edition of Behind the Legend in 2011.

Upcoming workshops

OMAFRA provides training workshops for you. These workshops explain food safety practices and help you apply them at your facility. Using real-life, practical examples, you will learn how to improve food safety where you work from instructors with industry experience.

- **Personnel Practices/Handling:** February 1, 2011, Guelph, ON
Processors: \$45 plus HST Non-Processors: \$65 plus HST
- **Sanitation/Receiving and Shipping:** February 22, 2011 Guelph, ON
Processors: \$45 plus HST Non-Processors: \$65 plus HST

More information at: www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/foodsafety/processors/events.htm

MEAT INSPECTION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

REGIONAL MANAGERS

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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.

AREA MANAGERS

Brighton — John Haagsma	613-475-5446
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