

Behind the Legend

ISSUE NO. 13 Quarterly newsletter for Ontario's provincially licensed meat plant operators June 2014

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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Meat Regulation Exempt facilities transitioning to public health inspection

Since new exemptions under the Meat Regulation came into effect, area managers have been working with municipal public health units to transfer the responsibility for inspection of exempt facilities to public health units.

So far, 18 plants have undergone this transition, the majority of which were eligible for the volume exemption.

The Meat Inspection Program continues to work with licensed meat plant operators who believe they fall under one of these exemptions. Determining if a plant is exempt requires a case-by-case evaluation, including a review of records that demonstrate yearly patterns of activities. Operators may contact their area managers to discuss their situation and potential eligibility. In certain cases, area managers may contact operators of plants that are obviously exempt (e.g., if they produce only pizza or edible oil).

The ministry conducted five regional workshops in May and June to provide additional, more in-depth training on meat processing to public health inspectors. Public health inspectors have authority under the Health Protection and Promotion Act to take action when they find food safety concerns.

For more information contact your area manager or visit: www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/meatinsp/frequentquest.htm

Exemption Refresher

Food Product Exemption

A provincial licence is not required if a business **only** prepares:

- Sandwiches that contain meat as an ingredient; or
- Pizzas that include meat as an ingredient; or
- Edible oil or fat; or
- Bouillon; or
- Any other meat product, if the amount of meat contained in it is 25 percent or less by weight of the product's total ingredients.

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Exemption Refresher — Continued from page 1

Volume Distribution Exemption

Businesses may wholesale a small portion of meat products without requiring a provincial licence. A business is exempt from OMAFRA licensing if the business:

- **Only** performs lower risk activities (Category 1 activities); **and**
- Sales to wholesale markets do not exceed the greater of either:
 - 25 percent of meat products sold in a fiscal year; and
 - 20,000 kg of meat products sold in a fiscal year.

Food Service Exemption

Businesses are exempt from OMAFRA licensing if the majority of the business' sales are meals or meal portions prepared for immediate consumption on the premises or elsewhere. This means that a restaurant or caterer would not require a provincial licence if more than 50 percent of their business is preparing meals. ■

New animal handling and care regulations are coming into effect July 1, 2014

Abattoir operators are reminded that the following new requirements, announced in the fall of 2013, are coming into effect on July 1, 2014:

- Plants need to have:
 - A back-up stunning device, alternative equipment or method in the event of equipment failure or improper stunning; and,
 - Appropriate equipment to restrain and euthanize animals that are found compromised, unfit or non-ambulatory in their holding pens or crates.
- Rabbits may not be suspended while conscious.

For information about these new requirements please contact your area manager. ■

Improving inspection effectiveness at licensed meat plants Operators will benefit from improved communication and clarity

An agreement signed in April 2014 between OMAFRA and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) will improve inspection efficiency and effectiveness at licensed meat plants.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) clarifies the responsibilities of OMAFRA and local boards of health (via the MOHLTC) and streamlines inspection in meat plants that include a retail or food service component. The MOU also provides a framework to enhance communication and cooperation between OMAFRA and local boards of health to support inspection roles.

Local boards of health are responsible for the inspection of food premises. This role overlaps with OMAFRA's responsibility for inspecting licensed meat plants, particularly in meat plants with retail or food service areas. This overlap

made it necessary to clarify the respective roles of boards of health and OMAFRA in meat plants licensed under the Meat Regulation.

The MOU is currently being rolled out with Meat Inspection Program staff and boards of health. Annual meetings, regular sharing of information on licensed plants and food premises, training and heightened awareness of meat hazards in food premises will contribute to a successful partnership and effectiveness of inspection.

Clarity in OMAFRA and Public Health inspection roles and better information sharing will improve communications with operators and reduce ambiguity. ■

There are no Meat Plant Guideline updates this quarter

Did you know that the Meat Regulation is also available in French?

Find the *Règlement sur les viandes* at: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca, choose *Français*, then click on *Recherche* and type 31/05 in the box.

Canadian Sheep Identification Program

Ensure tags are kept with the sheep carcass

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) is an industry-led initiative to develop a traceability system for sheep. Under this program, sheep producers must tag sheep leaving their flock of origin with an approved CSIP tag.

All sheep arriving at a meat plant should have a tag. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) policy around ear tag requirements and pictures of acceptable tags can be found at: http://canadaid.ca/about_us/documents/approved_sheep_tags_v5a.pdf

Currently sheep do not need a RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tag. Pink Ketchum tags are no longer being manufactured and are being phased out.

Once at the plant, the tag (or the number) must accompany the carcass until final carcass inspection is complete. This is useful when reportable diseases or *Cysticercosis ovis* are found, since the tag allows the CFIA to trace an animal back to the farm of origin. All records related to the sheep you slaughter must be kept on file for at least two years.

It may occur that sheep arrive at the plant without a tag. When this happens, the operator needs to notify the CFIA.

Untagged sheep are not held for residue sampling if they are normal on ante and post mortem inspection. ■

Sheep tag examples



Prevention, assistance, education Enhanced approach to inspection

Innovative training for inspection and veterinary staff is helping to change and refine the provincial approach to meat inspection. These changes will provide operators with more opportunities to propose practical and effective solutions and improve overall relationship with inspectors.

The "Approach to Inspection" course teaches OMAFRA staff to interpret the act and regulation, use observation and information gathering in a consistent way, and apply the Regulators' Code of Practice more thoroughly. The course also strengthens communication skills for inspectors to ensure their decisions are transparent for plant operators and personnel.

"This is about changing the culture and mindset of our program," said Lee Orphan, general manager. "We are

refining how we carry out our inspection work and engage with operators to achieve our common goal: compliance with food safety requirements."

"Our focus is working with operators on problem-solving, and following a consistent method for making decisions, taking action and communicating these decisions and actions," he said. "Sometimes there is more than one way to achieve food safety outcomes. We are open to consider various options, including operators' innovative suggestions, and to assess them against the Food Safety and Quality Act and the Meat Regulation."

To promote food safety and animal welfare, staff are learning to use "the ladder", a systematic approach to inspection based on prevention, assistance and education. They follow

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Enhanced approach to inspection —Continued from page 3

the same steps in the same order every time:

- Observe
- Gather information
- Ask questions
- Analyze risk
- Use regulatory authority
- Determine desired outcome
- Take corrective actions

Training started in February 2014 and all levels of the Meat Inspection Program across the province, as well as ministry's

regulatory compliance and animal health and welfare partners, will receive the training by September.

Staff have started applying these skills in the field. While staff will continue to take immediate action to address high food safety risks, operators should generally expect inspectors to conduct more in-depth information gathering, ask more questions and listen more prior to following compliance procedures. Operators' cooperation in joint problem-solving with inspectors will contribute to determining appropriate actions to achieve compliance. ■

Reminder to abattoir operators: New federal pig traceability requirements

All movements of swine need to be reported to PigTrace Canada **as of July 1, 2014**. More information at: www.ontariopork.on.ca or 1-877-668-7675.

Need a premises ID? It's easy and it's free. Visit www.ontarioppr.com or call 1.855.MY.PPR.ID

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Watch for your electronic newsletter next quarter! ■

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There are currently 130 provincially licensed abattoirs and 381 provincially licensed freestanding meat plants in Ontario.