



Behind the Legend

Quarterly newsletter for Ontario's provincially licensed meat plant operators
Issue 29 Fall 2019

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.

Microbial Control Interventions

To further protect food safety, on **October 1, 2019**, provincially licensed meat plant operators will be required to implement a microbial control intervention to control *E. coli* and *Salmonella* spp. on **pig, sheep, lambs, goat and poultry carcasses**. Note that poultry includes chicken, fowl, turkey, ducks, geese, fancy poultry and all other birds slaughtered in provincial meat plants. The requirement for microbial control interventions came into effect on July 1, 2019 for beef and veal carcasses.

A range of options for interventions are available for you to choose from such as hot water, steam, acid wash and dry aging. See [Meat Plant Guideline \(MPG\) S9.08.13.02](#) for full list of intervention options. For operators who have already adopted an effective intervention, this may be continued provided that it aligns with the Meat Plant Guidelines (MPG) requirements.

The application of microbial control interventions, when used as outlined in the [MPG S9.08.13.02](#), can significantly reduce bacteria numbers, lowers the risk of food-borne illness, and protects your investment and industry reputation.

Documentation and record keeping are key to an effective intervention. It will be your responsibility to develop, implement and maintain an intervention protocol at your meat plant. Protocol templates are available to assist you and can be obtained through your Area Manager.

For more information on microbial control interventions visit ontario.ca/meatinspection or contact your Area Manager.

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Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Meat Inspection Program Management Team

Your Area Manager can be reached by dialing their mobile device directly. We encourage initial contact by telephone during office hours (unless for emergencies) as text messages and or emails are not always reliable.

General Manager:

Rodger Dunlop - 519-827-6726

Operations Manager:

Kristy Mitrovic - 519-820-6401

Regional Managers

East: Kim Landers – 289 213-4081

West: Nick Van Lankveld – 226 820-2102

Central and North: Pierre Adrien -
416 524-1851

For more information:

Telephone: 1-877-424-1300

Email: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Web: ontario.ca/meatinspection

Twitter: @OMAFRASafeFood

Aussi disponible en français

Area Managers

Peel: Alan Yee - 905-903-5389

Midhurst: Eloise Jones - 416-433-2483

Kemptville: Philip Hawken - 613-868-7917

Brighton: Robin Drew - 613-848-1432

Vineland: Goce Manevski - 905-515-5500

Woodstock: Eric DeBoer - 519-274-9123

Ridgetown: Nick Van Lankveld – 226-820-2102

Stratford: Katy Field - 519-788-6533

Guelph: Kathryn Evans-Bitten - 519-994-3244

Verner: Vicky French - 705-491-2523

GTA: Ivona Jarosz - 647-231-8866

York: Natasha Jordanovska - 416-728-0326

Streamlining OMAFRA's Meat Plant Audit Program

OMAFRA's Meat Plant Audit Program (MPAP) delivers comprehensive auditing to all provincially licensed abattoirs and meat processing plants. The program is administered in addition to regular inspection service with an aim to verify compliance with food safety requirements of the Meat Regulation (O. Reg. 31/05) under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001*. Regulated activities that are subject to auditing include animal slaughter, meat processing (e.g., curing, dehydrating, fermenting, or smoking), and fish processing. Slaughter activities are audited by Ministry veterinarians, while meat and fish processing are audited separately by accredited third-party auditors.

Since animal slaughter, meat processing, and fish processing are each audited separately, for some meat plants who perform more than one of these activities, this could mean a 2 to 3 day time commitment. We heard that this is burdensome for some operators who cannot easily take time away from business operations to accommodate multiple audits. On the other hand, some plants prefer their audits on separate days if it works better for their business. We recently reviewed MPAP and found that audit scheduling could be improved so it is more streamlined and efficient for meat plant operators while continuing to maintain the same food safety outcomes. To this end, we developed a two-tiered scheduling system that provides same-day auditing for some plants, while keeping audits on separate days for others. Ontario meat plants who would benefit from same-day scheduling were identified based on input from auditors and Area Managers who work directly with industry-members. In total, 56 plants were identified that could accommodate and would benefit from same-day audits.

The two-tiered scheduling is only in its second month, but results are already promising. In the month of June alone, same-day scheduling has reduced the total number of auditing days by four, with an estimated time-savings for operators of 16-24 hours. The system will continue to roll out over the next year, and we expect further reductions in the total time spent by meat plant operators for audits, as well as improvements in program efficiency overall.

Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

This past summer, OMAFRA initiated targeted surveillance to screen for chronic wasting disease (CWD) in farmed cervids (e.g., white tailed deer, reindeer, mule deer, black-tailed deer, elk, red deer, elk-red deer hybrids, fallow deer, sika deer, as well as any other deer, moose or caribou). The surveillance targets provincially licensed meat plants that slaughter the highest volume of cervids. CWD is a disease that all cervids are susceptible to and is caused by an infectious protein called a prion which causes a disease very similar to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle. Unlike BSE, the prion with CWD is widely distributed in all tissues, including edible tissues.

There are currently no known cases of CWD in Ontario, however, the risk for CWD entering the province has increased because of CWD's presence in neighbouring US states and Quebec. OMAFRA's surveillance will better inform the ministry of the presence of CWD in Ontario and enable faster response if it is found.

As a Meat Plant Operator, you will continue being responsible for:

- Informing your Regional Veterinarian (RV) and Meat Hygiene Officer(s) (MHO) of the scheduled arrival of any cervids;
- Informing your RV and MHO(s) if the owner/farmer of incoming cervids is part of the Voluntary Herd Certification Program; and
- Removing cervid heads in a manner that preserves lymph nodes required for a complete sample.

In June, Meat Plant Operators that slaughter a high volume of cervids will have received a letter with further guidance, however, if you require more information please contact your RV or Area Manager.

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Internet Meat Sales

OMAFRA recognizes that the internet is a beneficial business tool to meat plant operators. It can serve as a way of boosting sales, and potentially extending your reach to new clients. As such, OMAFRA does not discourage the use of internet sales in your business model. However, meat plant operators need to be aware that the provincial licence only allows for sale and distribution of meat within the province of Ontario.

Only meat or meat products that were manufactured, processed, treated, preserved, packaged or labelled within a meat plant that holds a Safe Food for Canadians licence may be exported or traded outside of Ontario, as per the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* section 15 (1)(c). Therefore, distributing provincially inspected meat or meat products, or working with a wholesaler or third-party seller to distribute provincially inspected meat or meat products outside of Ontario, is a breach of federal regulation.

Consequences of conducting such activities may include provincial and/or federal investigations against implicated parties and seizure and/or detention of products, depending on the outcome of the investigation. If you discover any of your provincially inspected meat or meat products are being illegally distributed outside of Ontario via a third-party seller you should notify OMAFRA inspection staff and take action to ensure any illegal distribution is immediately discontinued. OMAFRA inspection staff will report any known violations.

We wanted to take this opportunity to remind you and your clients that the distribution of provincially inspected meat or meat products is not permitted outside of Ontario, by internet sale or otherwise.

Upcoming Events

Meat Industry Expo October 25 & 26 Niagara Falls, ON, please contact ontariomeatandpoultry.ca for more information

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