



Behind the Legend

Quarterly newsletter for Ontario's provincially licensed meat plant operators
Issue 31 Summer 2020

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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Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

Ontario 

Message from the General Manager: Working Together to Reduce the Risks of COVID-19

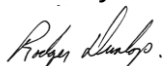
Plant operators and the Meat Inspection Program (MIP) have been working hard together in the fight against COVID-19. I want to take this opportunity to thank plant operators, plant staff and inspection staff for all your efforts and vigilance during this unprecedented time. By working together, we have continued to protect food safety and ensured an uninterrupted supply of meat gets to consumers. As always, the health and safety of workers is our top priority. That is why the MIP made changes not only to protect our staff, but to also help protect the safety of plant staff and operators. New measures include providing additional personal protection equipment (PPE), updated PPE policies, and additional training for inspection staff. It also includes implementing the use of masks in all meat plants by inspection staff and providing additional hand and surface sanitizer for use by our inspection staff. We continue to monitor the situation and will update and adapt our policies as needed.

I want to thank and commend operators for all of the efforts you've made to stop the spread of COVID-19. Each plant has developed and implemented a COVID-19 preventative plan, as well as a COVID-19 positive response protocol which outlines the steps to be taken in the event someone working in a plant tests positive for COVID-19. These new plans enhance an operator's ability to respond promptly, communicate with the necessary parties (e.g. OMAFRA, the local Public Health Unit), and minimize business interruptions. Plants have also formalized pre-screening protocols for visitors, provided additional PPE, and where necessary, made changes to their plant to allow for social distancing and further protection of staff. Plants have continued to adjust quickly to fight this virus and maintain the food supply. I thank you for that.

During this COVID-19 outbreak, there has been a noticeable increase in demand for services from provincial meat plants. As a program, we have received multiple requests for supplementary inspection in order to meet your inspection needs which we worked to fulfill. This is an encouraging trend towards a renewed reliance on our provincial meat industry. Keep up the great work on this front! On the food safety front, thank you for your continued efforts in managing food safety risks during this pandemic. For freestanding meat plants, your heightened vigilance around sanitation contributes greatly towards a safe environment and safe products. For abattoirs, we have entered the high-risk period for Shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (summer months) and hygienic slaughter and dressing practices are as critical now as ever. We are committed to working with you as you oversee sound practices by staff. Microbial swabbing by inspectors (and operators in some cases) continues to be an effective method of helping to ensure practices are effective.

By working together, we can ensure the goals of food safety and animal welfare are achieved. Thank you for your continued cooperation and best wishes towards a safe and successful summer.

Sincerely,



Rodger Dunlop, General Manager, Meat Inspection Program

Funding Opportunity: Agri-food Workplace Protection Program - Provincially Licensed Meat Processors

The governments of Canada and Ontario are helping agri-food businesses address new and immediate health and safety issues directly related to COVID-19 impacts.

Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the Agri-food Workplace Protection Program will provide funding for Provincially Licensed Meat Processors to implement COVID-19 measures to maintain a safe workplace. Support is also available for employees who require mandatory isolation, work-site mobility and transportation that is in line with public health guidelines.

Visit the website for the most up-to-date information:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/cap/meatplants.htm>



Digital First Approach to Communications

The Meat Inspection Program is excited to expand our delivery of program communications to you digitally! As of February, we have offered products such as the Behind the Legend Newsletter, information on funding opportunities, updates to Meat Plant Guidelines, changes to regulatory requirements, in real time and in a convenient, accessible format.

Our program is committed to providing you with timely information in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner. We are striving for a digital-first approach that respects tax payers' money by reducing printing and mailing costs.

Thank you to those who have already shared their email addresses for this purpose. To ensure that you don't miss out on important communications from the ministry, please provide an email address to your Area Manager, so we can get you the information you need quickly.

Safe Handling, Shipping and Transportation of Carcasses, Poultry and Meat Products

Provincially licensed meat plant operators have an obligation to handle, store, ship and transport meat under appropriate conditions. During summer in Ontario, your increased awareness and diligence in temperature monitoring will play a critical role in enabling carcasses and meat products to rapidly reach and be maintained at acceptable temperatures.

Variance in the temperatures of rooms, areas, coolers and freezers can occur during the summer months due to strains on cooling systems, resulting in loss of time and potential spoilage of meat. Very warm weather also has the potential to increase temperatures in non-refrigerated rooms and areas where meat is handled or processed. As temperatures outside rise, to ensure that carcasses and meat products produced in your facility remain safe for human consumption and are maintained at the highest quality possible, you may put in place further controls such as increasing verification of internal carcass/ meat product temperatures and frequently monitoring room, area and cooler temperatures. Employee training and awareness in the importance of timely and frequent temperature checks, and their heightened knowledge of safe temperatures during cooling, cutting, handling and processing, can have a broad impact on the safety and quality of meat and meat products produced at your plant.

As a reminder, provincially licensed slaughter and freestanding meat plants must ensure:

- Coolers are maintained at 4 degrees Celsius or less
- Freezers are maintained at minus 18 degrees Celsius or less
- The facility is equipped with properly calibrated thermometers

If it is not possible to maintain the temperature in the processing areas at 10 degrees Celsius or less, we advise operators to ensure the following:

- Internal temperature monitoring is frequent enough such that it prevents meat and meat product temperatures from rising above 10 degrees Celsius
- Compensating controls are in place, such as cleaning and sanitizing the area every four hours

Vigilance in temperature monitoring doesn't end there. Acceptable temperatures of carcasses and meat products during packaging, staging and loading must be maintained. Shipping temperatures must be monitored and continue through transport to the receiver.

As a reminder, fresh, processed and frozen meat products must have an internal temperature of 4 degrees Celsius or less prior to shipping; and transport vehicles must be able to keep these items frozen or at 4 degrees Celsius or less at all times.

To further enable your carcasses and meat products to ship and transport at safe temperatures:

- Minimize delays before shipping
- Pre-cool refrigerated transport containers
- Refrigerated transport containers should keep the air inside at or below 4 degrees Celsius
- Don't overcrowd: cold air should fully circulate below and above the meat as it's being transported
- Monitor temperature inside the transport container to ensure it remains constant during transport

Inadequate controls in your plant can endanger the safety of your product and create unacceptable levels of risk for the consumer, and to your business. During summer, a proactive approach to implementing enhanced preventative maintenance could avert costly interruptions in your cooling system. Heightened diligence in temperature monitoring can help keep meat within regulatory temperature limits, preserve your product quality and greatly reduce food safety risks to your customers.

Sign up to get **Behind the Legend** by email

Do you get too much mail?
Is your desk cluttered with paper?

Sign up to get a digital version of Behind the Legend. All you have to do is send an email to meat.inspection.communications@ontario.ca with "Email me Behind the Legend" in the subject line, and the newsletter will be emailed to you every quarter. No more paper! It's as simple as that.



Uncontrolled Ingredients

Prepared meat products often contain ingredients such as spices and seasonings, which help to add or improve flavours. These ingredients and their components (simply, ingredients of ingredients) could potentially introduce hazards to the finished product if uncontrolled by the operator.

The introduction of allergens through ingredients is one such hazard. Allergen and allergen containing ingredients can cause allergic reactions in certain hypersensitive individuals. Symptoms of an allergic reaction range in severity from a rash or itching of the mouth, migraine headaches, a drop-in blood pressure, anaphylaxis (a very severe allergic reactions to food involving failure of multiple organ systems), and death.

The only way for an allergic individual to protect themselves is strict avoidance of the allergen. It is therefore important for operators to maintain control of ingredients when producing prepared meat products. This can be done by purchasing ingredients that have clear traceability, such as by using suppliers who provide supplier documentation, maintain an adequate recall program, and communicate any changes made to their product lines. For example, if a supplier of an ingredient needed to initiate a recall of their product, any customers using that product should also be informed such that their own products, brand and customers were protected.

It is a regulatory requirement of operators to implement and maintain control procedures to identify, quantify, eliminate, minimize or control hazards. If an operator cannot identify if a hazard (such as an unidentified or undeclared allergen) exists within their ingredients, they similarly cannot control it within their finished product. Should a consumer develop a reaction after consuming a product where all ingredients and/or components were not identified, it would be difficult for that operator to identify which ingredient or component caused the reaction.

OMAFRA is reminding all operators that they are responsible for ensuring that any process used in the preparation of a meat product is designed and implemented to ensure a safe meat product. Furthermore, while ingredient labelling falls under federal requirements, all provincial operators must also meet these requirements in addition to provincial requirements; this includes ensuring that all allergens are properly declared on finished product labels.

How can you ensure the ingredients you are adding to your meat products do not pose a food safety risk? The following requirements and best practices should be considered:

- All incoming ingredients must be clearly labelled with their components identified, and accurately transferred onto the finished product label.
- Avoid purchasing ingredients from retailers or suppliers:
 - where there is obvious potential for allergen or microbial cross-contamination;
 - who cannot provide information regarding ingredients or their components;
 - who cannot maintain control over their product and ingredients; and
 - who do not have a reliable recall program.

Regardless of where you purchase ingredients, it's important that you request information regarding those ingredients so that it can be accurately included in the finished product label. OMAFRA encourages operators to work with their suppliers in order to promote consumer confidence in their products.

Labelling Requirements for Meat Products Processed in Provincially Licensed Meat Plants

A food label is an important communication tool, and a legal requirement that informs the consumer about a product. Labels must be:

- compliant with regulatory requirements,
- true and not false or misleading,
- readable, and
- prominently displayed on the appropriate display surface.

Meat products processed and/or packaged and labelled in your facility must comply with provincial specific labelling requirements established in [Ontario Regulations 31/05](#), as well as federal food labelling requirements established in the [Food and Drugs Act and Regulations](#), and the [Safe Food for Canadians Act and Regulations](#).

Provincially licensed meat plants must ensure that meat and meat products are fully labelled before they are shipped from the plant.

Provincial labelling requirements include:

- Meat Inspection legend;
- production date or code (not required for carcasses or half carcasses);
- species identification, whenever a carcass, cut, organ or tissue is described on the label (for example: chicken legs, beef liver, lamb chops),
- storage instructions, such as “Keep refrigerated” or “Keep frozen”, unless the meat is shelf stable;
- the words “May contain kidneys” or “May contain kidneys/Peut contenir des reins” for young chickens and young ducks;
- whenever the product appears to be ready-to-eat but is not, the words “ready to cook” or “uncooked” and comprehensive cooking instructions,
- declaration of priority allergens, either in the list of ingredients or in a “May Contain” statement as per the *Food and Drugs Act* and Regulations;
- the words “clean, green” or “clean, green/lave, vert” if the meat product is part of an alimentary tract that has not been scalded or bleached, but cleaned in another manner;
- when a word or phrase from the table in [section 119](#) (Labelling Restrictions Based on Process of Meat Products) is shown on the label of a meat product, the product meets the related requirements of the table;
- where there is a standard set out in [Table 1](#), Meat Products Standards, the product conforms to the standards set out by the table and the related common name is used on the label;
- labels for ungraded beef include the words “ungraded beef”;
- application of federal labelling requirements; and

- all required information is legible, and characters are at least 1.6 mm in height (unless the principal display area is 10cm² or less, in which case the characters are at least 0.8 mm in height).

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for compliance and enforcement of federal food labelling requirements. They have several resources available to assist you when designing or assessing your meat product labels for compliance with federal labelling requirements.

- [The Food Labelling Tool for Industry](#) is a helpful tool that further describes the core labelling requirements listed above, as well as other information such as the use of health claims and other statements.
- The CFIA has also developed a [Food Labelling Requirements Checklist](#) which can be used as a self-assessment tool to review your labels for compliance.

If you have any questions or require clarification with regards to federal labelling requirements you may contact your area [CFIA Office](#).

Internet Resources:

Ontario Regulation 31/05: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/050031>

Federal Food Labelling Tool for Industry: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/eng/1383607266489/1383607344939>

Federal Food Labelling Requirements Checklist: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/food-labelling-requirements-checklist/eng/1393275252175/1393275314581>

CFIA Area and Regional Offices: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-cfia/offices/eng/1313255382836/1313256130232>

Federal Food and Drug Regulations: https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._870/index.html

Federal Safe Food for Canadians Regulations: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2018-108/index.html>

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Ontario's agri-food industry:
twitter.com/OMAFRASafeFood



Fish Processing Regulation under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001*

To enhance food safety and increase consumer confidence in the safety of Ontario's fish products, effective January 1, 2020 Ontario introduced a new fish processing regulation, Ontario Regulation 465/19 (Fish Processing), under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001* (FSQA).

Fish processors, including provincially licensed meat plants, within scope of the new regulation are required to obtain a licence by January 1, 2021.

The new regulation is consistent with current industry standards, while protecting public health and supporting growth in the fish processing industry. Licensed fish processors in Ontario will be able to better brand their business by including their licence number on their packaging, in accordance with the regulation. The full regulation can be found at www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r19465.

The current Fish Interim Audit Program (FIAP) administered by OMAFRA under the *Fish Inspection Act* and Regulation 456: Quality Control will continue to operate until December 31, 2020. It will then be replaced by a new fish inspection program starting January 1, 2021 when the new Fish Processing Regulation under the FSQA becomes fully in force.

In order to support fish processors who will require a licence, the ministry began accepting requests for licence applications in January 2020. Operators that have requested the application package started receiving the package in mid-July. We encourage you to apply early in order to avoid any potential disruption to your business. To request a licensing package, please contact the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300 or by e-mail at ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca. As part of providing [accessible service](#), you can also contact the AICC if you require this information in alternate formats.

If you have any questions, please contact a Food Safety Advisor at (519) 546-2340 or by email at Fish.Program.Communications@ontario.ca.

Are You Making Changes to Your Meat Plant?

Before you make the changes, save yourself money and time by ensuring these changes align with the requirements under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001* and the Meat Regulation. The regulation requires that you provide written notice at least 30 days before making an alteration to your licensed meat plant. Alterations include any significant changes to the building, equipment, or licensed activities of the plant. The 30-day notification allows OMAFRA to review the planned changes with you to confirm the proposed alteration appears to meet the regulatory requirements. Proceeding with such changes without OMAFRA approval could cost you additional money and time and result in non-compliance with regulatory requirements. Questions? Contact your Area Manager early to discuss planned alterations.

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:

Tracy Adams – 613 847-5116

Regional Managers:

East: Kim Landers – 289 213-4081

West: Nick Van Lankveld – 226 820-2102

Central and North: Pierre Adrien -
416 524-1851

Area Managers:

Brighton: Robin Drew - 613 848-1432

Midhurst: Eloise Jones - 416 433-2483

Ridgetown: Nick Van Lankveld - 226 820-2102

Vineland: Goce Manevski - 905 515-5500

GTA: Ivona Jarosz - 647 231-8866

Peel: Alan Yee - 905 903-5389

Stratford: Eric DeBoer - 519 274-9123

Verner: Vicky French - 705 491-2523

Guelph: Kathryn Evans-Bitten - 519 994-3244

Kemptville: Peter Fitzpatrick - 613 246-0070

Woodstock: Katy Field – 519 788-6533

York: Natasha Jordanovska - 416 728-0326

For more information:

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ontario.ca/meatinspection

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