



Meat Safety Regulations in the NWT

Discussion Paper

DECEMBER | 2021



OVERVIEW

Objective:

The Department of Health and Social Services is seeking feedback from stakeholders and the public on the proposed key elements that will form the future Meat Safety Regulations.

All feedback is welcome and may be submitted by February 17, 2022.

Attn: Comments on Proposed Meat Safety Regulations
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The following discussion paper outlines the proposed provisions for the future Meat Safety Regulations. The proposed key elements take into account the current meat inspection regulations in other Canadian jurisdictions, while also giving careful consideration to the size and activities of meat producers in the NWT and the regulation capacity of the Department.

The Department encourages you to read the Discussion Paper and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document also posted for your information.

The Department welcomes all comments and suggestions on the proposed key elements.

Please let us know what you think and if you have any questions.

Glossary of Terms

To help provide clarity to what the regulations are intended to address, definitions are provided for relevant terms specific to the Meat Safety Regulations:

- **Animal:** any animal raised for food whose meat is intended to be used for human consumption, including poultry. This does not include fish, reindeer, or wild game.
- **Farm Gate** is a where producers offer their meat / food for private sale directly to the consumer. Typically, sales happen from their own property from freezer / fridge, or in a roadside stand to the consumer.
- **Food Establishment** is a place where food is manufactured, processed, prepared, packaged stored, handled, displayed, transported, distributed, served, offered for sale or sold. This can include restaurants, food vendors, food trucks, caterers etc.
- **Food safety program:** a training program for operators on the humane slaughter of animals, and safe and sanitary handling of animal or meat.
- **Handling:** the slaughter, manufacture, processing, preparation, packaging, storing, displaying, transporting, distributing, offering for sale, or sale of meat.
- **Livestock:** animals raised to produce commodities.
- **Meat:** the flesh of any animal raised for food or by-product of it intended for human consumption in a primary or processed form.
- **Meat Inspection:** the pre-slaughter inspection of live animals, and/or the post slaughter inspection of meat, to help determine the health of animals both prior to death (ante-mortem) and after death (post-mortem). This is done in order to prevent and detect public health hazards such as foodborne pathogens or chemical contaminants in meat.
- **Meat Premises:** a place where animals are slaughtered and includes portions of the place where meat is handled. Meat premises include both physical establishments such as buildings, as well as land, such as farms where animals are slaughtered, or meat handled. Both must be included to account for the size and activities of meat producers in the NWT.
- **Meat Premises Specifications:** plans and specifications for the construction or alteration of a meat premises.
- **Operator** includes:
 - A person who manages or directs the animal slaughter or meat handling in a meat premises;
 - A person who holds a meat premises permit;
 - An owner of a meat premises; or
 - Any other person who is responsible for the operation of a meat premises
- **Producer:** the person raising the animals for food

Introduction

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Health and Social Services (Department) is working to develop new Meat Safety Regulations under the *Public Health Act*. These new Regulations are intended to facilitate the availability of locally raised animals in the Northwest Territories (NWT) for meat or meat products and set standards and other requirements to ensure safe handling practices to protect public health.

The Meat Safety Regulations will not apply to the harvesting or sale of wild fish, game species, or reindeer. Existing federal and territorial legislation and any agreements which oversee the harvesting and sale of wild game, reindeer and fish would still apply to those activities and products.

The *Public Health Act* provides the GNWT with the legal authority to protect the health of NWT residents from a broad range of health risks that may present in a number of settings, including day cares, restaurants, public pools, municipal water treatment and sanitation, as well as oversight on public health functions relating to immunization, disease reporting and surveillance, and communicable disease management. The *Public Health Act* also provides the authority to create regulations related to food and premises where animals are killed.

The Department's role in environmental public health protection is to identify factors which create risks to public health, to monitor compliance to standards and intervene if necessary, to ensure that these risks are minimized or eliminated. Environmental Health Officers provide these health protection services and have a role in educating organizations and businesses on healthy practices.

Today, a permit under the *Food Establishment Regulations* is required to sell food and that food must be liable to inspection unless otherwise exempted under the Regulations. There is no current mechanism to inspect meat from locally raised animals, and therefore it may not be sold to the public.

The previous *Meat Inspection Regulations* were repealed in 2009, when a new *Public Health Act* came into force. These regulations provided very limited flexibility for individuals wishing to sell meat and were repealed partly because there were no slaughter or meat processing facilities operating in the NWT.

The new Meat Safety Regulations will support the goals of the *NWT Agriculture Strategy*, *The Business of Food: A Food Production Plan 2017-2022*, and the priority of the 19th Legislative Assembly to increase food security through access to locally produced food. This will be accomplished by regulating privately raised animals for meat production and sales, removing legislative barriers that prevent residents from developing meat production businesses.

The new regulations will allow for farm gate sales, farmers markets, food establishment sales, and sales through retail outlets.

The Department is seeking feedback to inform and assist in the development of these regulations. A [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document is also posted on the department website for your information.

Overview of Legislation Governing Meat Across Canada

Meat inspection and production is regulated at both the federal and provincial/territorial level. The federal and provincial/territorial governments have set out separate inspection processes, but regulatory principles often overlap. The *Safe Food for Canadians Act* and the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulation* regulate the import, export, and interprovincial trade of meat products. Meat that is being transferred between provinces/territories must be processed and inspected in a federally registered establishment. All food sold in Canada must also meet several requirements under the *Food and Drugs Act* regardless of where the food is produced or sold. For example, the *Food and Drugs Act* prohibits the manufacture of food under unsanitary conditions, the sale of food that is harmful, or unfit for human consumption, and the use of false or misleading advertising.

Creating Meat Safety Regulations in the Northwest Territories presents a unique challenge, given the small size and scale of meat producers compared to most jurisdictions in Canada. Most jurisdictions in Canada require meat to be inspected before and after slaughter, in order for it to be sold to the public. Regulations in the NWT will need to allow for some flexibility for small producers to slaughter and distribute uninspected meat for sale direct to consumers and/or retailers within the NWT, while ensuring all necessary operational and safety standards are followed and public health is protected.

Proposed Meat Safety Regulations

Meat Safety Regulations are intended to regulate the slaughter and handling of privately raised livestock in the NWT for food. Handling activities include the preparation, storage, and distribution of meat for sale and human consumption.

The regulations will allow NWT residents to sell meat and meat products from privately raised livestock to consumers in the NWT, under a meat permit or food establishment permit. Meat could be sold directly to consumers at a farmers' market, through farm gate or retail settings, and to food establishments such as restaurants, food vendors and caterers in the NWT.

The regulations will set standards and requirements to help ensure appropriate public health practices related to the slaughter of animals raised for food, and the safe handling, preparation, storage, and distribution of the meat for sale and human consumption. Operational standards will provide guidance on safe handling and slaughtering practices to ensure animals are slaughtered humanely and that any waste products are disposed of appropriately, mitigating risks to the environment and public health.

The activities the Meat Safety Regulations will apply to include:

- How animals are slaughtered and the humane treatment of animals prior to and during slaughter;
- Handling of meat post slaughter, including safe preparation and food handling practices;

- Location and plans for building or altering a premises as appropriate, where slaughtering and/or handling of meat will take place;
- Proper employee training and hygiene;
- Standards for proper equipment and their use and cleaning;
- Standards for adequate sanitation, ventilation, pest control, potable water, and storage of chemicals;
- Sale of meat including where it can be sold and requirements for packaging and labelling of the meat products; and
- Requirements for recall procedures.

Additionally, a permit under the *Food Establishment Safety Regulations* would also be required if a meat producer wishes to make and sell value-added products, such as ground meat or sausage, or food products containing the meat.

1. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to the Meat Safety Regulations would apply under specific circumstances.

The Meat Safety Regulations would **not** apply to:

- The slaughter or sale of wild fish, reindeer, or game species;
- The slaughter of one's own animal(s) for personal or family consumption; or
- A meat facility or slaughter establishment regulated under federal jurisdiction.

Any person will be able to apply for an exemption to a specific provision of the Meat Safety Regulations. There would also be authority to grant the application and place any conditions on the permit to ensure the protection of public health. An application could be granted with restrictions, or allowances placed on the permit, if the operator has demonstrated that they have alternate, adequate measures in place to protect public health.

2. WILD FISH, REINDEER, AND GAME EXCEPTION

The Meat Safety Regulations would not apply, and do not propose to change or affect existing rules with respect to the harvesting or sale of wild fish, reindeer, or game species. Carcasses of lawfully harvested and obtained wild fish, reindeer or game may be handled in a meat premise, provided certain conditions are met.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Are there any other activities that the Meat Safety Regulations should apply to? If so, why?
2. Are there any activities that the Meat Safety Regulations should not apply to? If so, why?
3. Is the regulation of the proposed activities sufficient to protect the health and safety of the public? If not, what else should be considered?

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

The Department of Health and Social Services proposes an application and permit system be put in place, to allow for the slaughter, handling, and sale of meat from animals raised for food in the NWT. The Department would need to collect enough information prior to approval, to be confident that the operator of a meat premises is aware of their responsibilities and is able to meet required safety standards to provide meat to the public safely.

The slaughter of animals for personal and family consumption would be exempt from the regulations, so a permit would not be required in those situations.

In addition, operators will be required to adhere to operational and program standards, best practices for record keeping, and requirements for labelling and reporting. Standards and documentation ensure the meat and meat products being sold or donated are safe for human consumption, and that tracking and traceability are possible in the event of an outbreak of food borne illness.

3.1 PERMIT & PERMIT APPLICATION

Persons who intend to slaughter and/or handle NWT animals raised to produce meat for sale, donation, or provision to non-household members, would need to apply for a meat premises permit.

Applicants would be required to provide specific information in their application to the Department including, but not limited to:

- **Evidence of taking an approved food safety program** on the slaughter and safe/sanitary handling of animals or meat that is relevant to the operation of a meat premises.
- **Food safety plan** which would identify possible sources of contamination in the slaughter establishment before, during and after slaughter. The plan would also outline steps to be taken to minimize the risk of meat becoming contaminated at the meat premises so that it is fit for human consumption.
- **Meat premises specifications** which would include the plans for building or altering a meat premises where slaughtering and/or handling of meat will take place, and include details of location, design, and construction. Approval of a meat premises would be determined in consideration of a number of criteria that assess the operator's ability to comply with the required standards, including water supply, sewage, lighting, ventilation, sanitary facilities for workers, equipment and its layout, product flow, waste management, cooling capacity, cleaning materials, and other conditions as required by the Chief Public Health Officer. This would not set aside or limit any requirement of applicable territorial or national building codes or occupational health and safety standards.
- **Plans for equipment and cleaning** – Operators would be required to ensure all equipment used in the slaughtering and handling meat is suitable for purpose, in good working order and durable, easy to clean and free of toxic substances. Operation of equipment must be done in a way that ensures the safe and sanitary slaughter of animals or handling of meat.

Three categories of permits are being proposed. These would be based on the intended frequency of slaughtering and/or meat handling activities in one year. These include:

1. **Annual Permit** – Four months or more, but not more than one year. Proposed cost \$108 annually. Example: a producer that plans to slaughter animals over the year on multiple occasions (a larger herd, flock or group of animals).
2. **Seasonal Permit** – Three weeks or more, but less than four months. Proposed cost \$54 per permit. Example: a producer who will only be slaughtering for a time-limited season (summer or fall as opposed to throughout the year).
3. **Temporary Permit** – Less than three weeks. Proposed cost \$25 per permit (**example:** a producer who is slaughtering at one time limited time per year. Example: a producer who raises chickens for sale and slaughters over a three-week period).

An annual permit could be renewed. A late renewal fee of \$50 for an annual permit would apply in addition to the renewal fee of \$108. Failure to renew an application within 30 days after the day on which the previous license expires would result in the operator having to apply for a new license.

A holder of a permit under the *Food Establishment Safety Regulations* would be permitted to handle or further process the meat of animals raised for food, if the animal has been legally slaughtered and obtained by the operator.

See Appendix A for scenarios of when a Meat Safety Regulation Permit versus a Food Establishment Safety Regulation permit would be required.

3.2 PERMIT CONDITIONS

The Department would review the application and have the ability to place conditions on the permit. Conditions would be based on the risk assessment conducted and determined through the application process. This would be done in conjunction with the program standards, guidelines and policies being developed to support training, safe slaughter, and meat production.

Permit conditions would take into account:

- Types and size of animals;
- Duration, frequency and volume of slaughter;
- Conditions of meat premises and where slaughtering takes place;
- Whether a pre-slaughter and/or post-slaughter inspection, or slaughter supervision is needed for higher risk slaughtering activities.

Conditions on the permit may require an operator to:

- Give advance notification of the slaughter, a minimum of 5 business days before the intended date of slaughter;
- Have a pre- and/or post-slaughter inspection done of the animals and meat respectively;

- Have the slaughter supervised by an approved person;
- Follow any other conditions placed on the permit deemed necessary to ensure the meat is safe for human consumption.

Operators would also be required to meet any standards, guidelines and policies developed by the Department of Health and Social Services. Operators who contravene the *Public Health Act*, the Meat Safety Regulations or the terms and conditions on their permit could have their permit revoked, suspended, or cancelled, and could be subject to penalties.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Are there any issues with the proposed permit structure?
2. Does the proposed permit structure create any barriers for small scale meat producers wanting to slaughter and sell their meat in the NWT? If yes, how?
3. Are the permit time frames reflective of the time frames slaughter would take place?

4. MEAT INSPECTION

The main purpose of a meat inspection is to detect and prevent public health hazards such as foodborne pathogens, and chemical and physical contaminants in meat.

The inspector would have the authority to inspect and hold or condemn animals and meat. The determination of whether an inspection is required would be based on a risk assessment completed at the time of application.

Larger operations that are slaughtering and processing a higher volume of animals would likely be required to have a pre- and post-slaughter inspection.

Smaller scale operations may be required to provide notification prior to slaughtering.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Would you consider buying meat that comes from a permitted individual, but that has not been inspected?

5. PACKAGE LABELLING & RECORD KEEPING – TRACKING AND TRACEABILITY

Packages containing meat produced by a meat premises would require labelling until sold to the consumer. Identifiers for tracking purposes would be required on the label, along with storage instructions and messaging stating the meat is uninspected. If the meat is inspected, it will have an inspection label. Food establishments will also be required to inform their customers if their products contain uninspected meat. This is essential to ensure the consumer can make an informed choice as to whether they are willing to assume the risk of eating uninspected meat.

Operators of meat premises will be required to keep records of the slaughter and meat handling activities for tracking and traceability of meat and meat products in the event of food-borne illness.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. How should food establishments be required to inform their customers that food products contain uninspected meat?
2. Would you purchase food products that contain uninspected meat from a food establishment?
3. As a food establishment would you be interested in selling products containing uninspected meat to your customers? If not, why?

6. OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

Operational Standards in the regulations are the minimum requirements that all operators must meet. Operational Standards would be supplemented further by program standards, policies and procedures respecting the slaughter, production, manufacture, sale, purchase, transport, and inspection of meat and meat products. This is to ensure that the meat produced at the meat establishment is safe for human consumption.

Operational Standards would outline requirements for:

- The facility / meat premises
- Equipment and cleaning
- Animal treatment and slaughter
- Record keeping
- Employee training and hygiene
- Pest control
- Chemical storage
- Food safety plan
- Operator training
- Recall procedure plan

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Are there any other standards that operators should be required to follow?

7. OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

Any operator who fails to comply with any requirements of the *Public Health Act*, its Regulations or an order under the Act may be subject to penalties which may include fines or imprisonment.

Penalties for new offences will align with similar offences under other Regulations under the *Public Health Act*.

The Meat Safety Regulations would be enforced by the Department of Health and Social Services designated public health officers (as appointed under the Public Health Act. These public health officers are the Department's Environmental Health Officers.

Enforcement will take place through any inspection processes or responding to complaints.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. How much oversight should the Department have with respect to the sale of locally raised meat within the NWT?
2. Would these Regulations make it likely for you to purchase locally raised and slaughtered NWT meat?
3. Is there anything you feel is missing from these key elements?

Thank you for your interest and feedback on this work. Your contributions will be included in a summary of *What We Heard* to be publicly available and considered in the development of regulations.

APPENDIX A: Scenarios for Application of Meat Premises Permit (Meat Safety Regulations) versus Food Establishment Permit (Food Establishment Safety Regulations)

Category	Animals owned by	Location	By whom	Meat for whom, purpose and/or use	MSR ¹ permit required	Notice to Slaughter	Labelling	FESR ² Permit Required	Notes/additional considerations
Slaughter	Self	At own property/premises	Self	Personal use	NO	NO	NO	NO	Slaughter for personal consumption and use is exempt from MSR requirements
				Direct to consumer sale/provision/donation	YES	YES	YES	NO	
				Sale to food premises/retailers	YES	YES	YES	NO	
	Self	At another person's property/premises	Self	Personal use	NO	NO	NO	NO	Slaughter for personal consumption and use is exempt from MSR requirements
				Direct to consumer sale/provision/donation	YES	YES	YES	NO	
				Sale to food premises/retailers	YES	YES	YES	NO	
Others	At own property/premises	Self	As service to others for their personal use	YES	YES	YES	NO		
	At another person's property/premises	Self	Direct to consumer sale/provision/donation	YES	YES	YES	NO		
Sell meat	Others	At property/premises	Self	Sale of NWT-produced meat slaughtered at MSR premises	NO	NO	YES	YES	
Butcher	Self	At premises	Self	Cut up, wrap and package meat for others	YES	NO	YES	NO	
	Others	Process meat at a food premises	Self	Cut up, wrap and package meat for others	NO	NO	YES	YES	FESR premises doing custom butcher
Process meat - value added	Self	At own property/premises	Self	Personal use	NO	NO	NO	NO	
	Self	At own property/premises	Self	Direct to consumer sale/provision/donation	YES	YES	YES	YES	Food Safety Plan for the processed meat and/or value-added products

¹ MSR = Meat Safety Regulations

² FESR = Food Establishment Safety Regulations