

# Applying for Vermont State Inspection

## **Guidelines for obtaining Vermont State Inspection for Meat and Poultry Establishments.**

The Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) and The Vermont Meat and Poultry Inspection Laws (6 V.S.A Chapter 204) require that all meat and poultry sold commercially be inspected and passed to ensure that it is safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. Inspection is required per [6 V.S.A. § 3304\(1\)](#), [9 CFR 302.1](#), [381.6](#), [532.1](#), and [590.20](#), at establishments that slaughter and/or prepare meat, meat food products, poultry, and/or poultry food products for human food that is subsequently transported and held for sale in commerce.

There are a variety of processes used in the preparation of meat and poultry products that require inspection including but not limited to, slaughtering, boning, cutting up, canning, salting, rendering, smoking, curing, or otherwise manufacturing or processing. All meat and poultry food products transported, held for sale, or offered for sale in commerce require inspection. A meat or poultry food product is any food product containing greater than 3% raw or 2% cooked meat or poultry. Examples include but are not limited to: steaks, roasts, ground meat, fresh sausages, smoked and cooked sausages, summer sausages, meat sticks, ham, bacon, smoked and cured products, pates, jerky, wraps, burritos, dumpling, soups, meat pies, samosa, empanadas, tamales lasagna, mac & cheese, shepherd's pie and other meals which contain meat or poultry.

### **Steps Required for Obtaining Vermont Meat and Poultry Inspection**

The steps explained in the next few pages provide general information to the applicant. The steps listed do not need to be accomplished in this exact order, but all steps need to be completed. In addition, the Vermont State and applicable Federal Regulations are also provided and referenced throughout this document. You are encouraged to refer to the regulations as you review each step of the guidelines.

Upon receipt of your application and completion of all items, the Program Chief or designee will conduct a review of your establishment. If all is found acceptable, a license will be issued granting you 90 days to start operations and validate your HACCP Program.

### **File an application for Inspection**

Before inspection is granted, each person shall apply to VAAFM Meat Inspection Program where applications are reviewed for accuracy and completeness. [Request for State Meat Inspection Services](#) and [Meat Handlers License Application](#) must be submitted as per 6 V.S.A [3306 - Licensing](#).

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Should you have any questions, please reach out to the Meat Program Chief or designee who will be able to provide a certain level of technical assistance, answer your questions, and review the process to help you determine your next steps. This can help ease your mind and prevent problems before they occur.

Feel free to use the email contact on this page but realize some of the topics and questions you have may require more in-depth discussions, which would be easiest over the phone or in person.

[Julie.boisvert@vermont.gov](mailto:Julie.boisvert@vermont.gov) – Program Section Chief

[Kelly.ireland@vermont.gov](mailto:Kelly.ireland@vermont.gov) – Meat Program Supervisor/Enforcement Investigations Officer

[Briton.laslow@vermont.gov](mailto:Briton.laslow@vermont.gov) – Meat Safety Compliance & Enforcement Specialist

## **General Information: Requirements for Issuance of a Meat Handlers License for Commercial Slaughter and/or Processing**

- Before being accepted into the Vermont Meat Inspection Program, an establishment shall:
  - develop a written Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (Sanitation SOPs) as required by [9 CFR 416](#).
  - conduct a hazard analysis and develop a HACCP plan, as required by [9 CFR Part 417.2](#) and [417.4](#). A conditional granting of inspection shall be allowed for a period not to exceed 90 days, during which time the establishment must validate its HACCP plan.
  - Develop a written recall plan as required by [9 CFR 418.3](#).
  - Develop a humane handling plan if slaughtering livestock or poultry.
- Each official establishment shall be separate and distinct from any unofficial establishment (e.g., FDA regulated product, custom or retail exempt product). Inspection services will not be allowed in any building in which any part of it is used as living quarters, unless the part for which inspection is requested is separated from such quarters by floors, walls, and ceilings of solid concrete, brick, wood, or similar material, and the floors, walls, and ceilings are without openings that communicate directly or indirectly with any part of a building used as living quarters.  
See- 9 CFR Parts [305.1](#), [381.26](#)
- Prior to the inauguration of inspection, when the owner or designee believes they have met the necessary requirements to start operations (e.g., developed a written Sanitation SOP, conducted a hazard analysis and have a written HACCP plan, developed

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a written recall plan, developed a written humane handling plan (if applicable), prepared labels, and facility), they will notify the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets – Meat Inspection Section.

- Upon notification, the Meat Program Section Chief or designee will schedule a date and time to conduct an onsite review of the establishment and complete all sections of the Circuit Supervisor On-Site Check list, including the 9 CFR Regulations/Resources by checking “COMPLY”, if compliant.
- If all items meet regulatory requirements, a “Conditional Grant of Inspection” will be issued. The conditional granting of inspection lasts for a period not exceeding 90 days, during which the establishment validates the adequacy of its HACCP plan in controlling the food safety hazards identified during the hazard analysis, and also verifies that the plan is being effectively implemented in accordance with 9 CFR [417.4](#). New product produced during this validation period may be distributed into commerce.

See- 9 CFR Parts [304.3](#), [305.4](#), [381.26](#), [381.27](#),

### Office Space

- Office space shall be provided by official establishments, rent free, for the exclusive official of the inspector and other VAAFM employees assigned to the establishment. The space set aside for this purpose shall meet with approval of the Meat Program Chief or designee. This space should be suitable for the storage of program supplies and for Inspection program personnel to change clothes if such clothes changing facilities are deemed necessary. Laundry service for Inspection program personnel’s outer work clothing shall be provided by each establishment. At the discretion of the Administrator, small plants requiring the services of less than one full time inspector need not furnish facilities for VAAFM employees as prescribed in this section, where adequate facilities exist in a nearby convenient location.

See – CFR Parts [307.1](#), [307.2](#), [307.3](#), [381.27](#) and [381.36\(a\)](#)

### Hours of Operation

- No operations requiring inspection shall be conducted except under the supervision of a Program employee. In establishments that conduct only further processing operations, the assigned inspector may not always be on site, but the operations are still considered “under the supervision of a Program employee”.
- A shift is a regularly scheduled operating period, exclusive of mealtimes. One lunch period is the only official authorized interruption in the inspector's tour of duty once it begins. Lunch periods may be 30 minutes, 45 minutes, or in any case may not exceed one hour in duration. Once established, the lunch period must remain relatively constant as to time and duration. Lunch periods for inspectors shall not, except as provided herein, occur prior to 4 hours after the beginning of scheduled operations nor later than 5 hours after operations begin.

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- Official establishments shall be provided 5 consecutive 8-hour days (per shift) of free inspection service during the basic work week of Monday through Friday, excluding the lunch period.
  - Each official establishment shall submit a work schedule to the VAAFM Meat Inspection for approval. In consideration of whether the approval of an establishment's work schedule shall be given, Meat Inspection shall take into account the efficient and effective use of Inspection Personnel. The work schedule must specify daily clock hours of operation and lunch periods for all departments of the establishment requiring inspection.
  - Establishments shall maintain consistent work schedules. Any request by an establishment for a change in its work schedule involving an addition or elimination of shifts shall be submitted to VAAFM Meat Inspection at least 2 weeks in advance of the proposed change. Request for inspection service outside an approved work schedule shall be made as early in the day as possible for overtime work to be performed within that same workday; or made prior to the end of the day's operation when such a request will result in overtime service at the start of the following day.

See – CFR Parts [307.4](#) and [381.37](#).

### Inspection Charges

Inspection service is provided free of charge for the first 8 hours per shift for 5 consecutive days (Monday through Friday). Any work conducted over an 8-hour shift, or any time past the initial 5 consecutive day period, will be charged to the plant at the prevailing hourly overtime rate. If the operator of the establishment requests inspection during odd hours, a minimum of 2 hours will be charged to the plant at the above rate. This rate is also charged if the plant works on any State Holiday. Please refer to the [State Holiday schedule](#). When any of the listed holidays fall on a weekday, that day becomes a holiday. When a holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding workday (Friday) becomes a holiday. When a holiday falls on a Sunday, the next workday (Monday) becomes a holiday.

See – [6 V.S.A. 3305\(7\)](#), CFR Parts [307.5\(a\)](#), [307.6](#), , [381.38](#), [381.39](#), 391.3

### Hours of Duty for Inspection Staff

The maximum time an on-line slaughter inspector may be assigned daily to a postmortem inspection position is 10 hours per day, and an off-line (e.g., further processing) inspector shall not be scheduled to more than a total of 12 hours per day. The 10-hour postmortem time, does not include time spent before and after slaughter operations, conducting ante-mortem, sanitation, and offal inspection; supervising disposal of condemned material, and preparing reports. Processing assignments shall not be more than 12 hours per day. Time used for meals is not included in counting the above hours. Lunch periods shall not be less than 30 minutes nor more than one hour. Lunch periods shall begin between the fourth and fifth hour of an IPP's tour of duty.

See – CFR Parts [307.4](#) and [381.37](#)

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## Obtain Approved Water Source Letter

If the water entering an establishment is supplied by a Municipal water supply system (i.e., city, county, or other public water system) the letter is issued by the Municipality, or the State Public Health Service or its county office. The letter should identify the source, state that the source is approved, and that the water is potable and meets tests prescribed by the Environmental Protection Agency in its "Drinking Water Standards." In addition to the water approval letter, a current acceptable water laboratory sample report (water potability certification) must be on file before inspection is granted.

NOTE: If the water is supplied from private wells or springs, testing must be done twice a year with results on file for review by inspection program personnel. [Public Health laboratory/Vermont](#)

## Sewage Disposal System

Sewage must be disposed into a sewage system separate from all other drainage lines or disposed of through other means sufficient to prevent backup of sewage into areas where product is processed, handled, or stored. When the sewage disposal system is a private system requiring approval by a State or local health authority, the establishment must furnish VAAFM with a letter of approval from that authority upon request.

Refer to 9 CFR [416.2\(f\)](#), or [590.146](#)

## Obtaining and Use of Approved Labels

After an Request for Meat Inspection Services official inspection has been filed with VAAFM Meat Inspection, an official plant number will be reserved for that applicant. This number is used to identify all inspected and passed products prepared in the establishment. All carcasses from slaughtered animals must be ink-branded with the Vermont Inspection legend, which includes the plant number. All packaged meat products must have the Vermont Inspection legend, with the plant's number printed on the label of the package. All labeling material must be approved and on-hand before inspection will be granted.

No final label shall be used on any product unless the sketch labeling of such final label has been submitted for approval to VAAFM Meat Inspection Program. The label application is accompanied by [Application for Approval of Vermont Labels](#), Marking, and Devices and a copy of the proposed finished product label. Instructions for how to complete the label application are included on the FSIS Website at the link below.

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Refer to 9 CFR Parts 312, 316, 317, & 381.96 thru 381.144,

[Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book](#)  
[Basics of Labeling](#)

## **Facilities Must Meet Regulatory Performance Standards**

Red meat and poultry establishments that conduct operations under the Vermont State Meat Inspection Program must conduct operations under the Provisions of 6 V.S.A Chapter 204 and 9 CFR [Part 416](#).

## **Implement and Maintain Establishment Sanitation Plan**

[Part 416: Sanitation Performance Standards](#)  
[Sample Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure \(SSOP\)](#)  
[Sanitation Performance Standards Compliance Guide](#)

## **Develop and Implement Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Plan**

[HACCP Planning](#)  
[Compliance Guideline HACCP Systems Validation](#)  
[Product Categorization](#)  
[Guidebook for the Preparation of HACCP Plans](#)  
[HACCP Models](#)  
[Vermont Humane Handling and Good Commercial Practices](#)  
[FSIS Compliance Guide for a Systematic Approach to the Humane Handling of Livestock](#)  
[How to Develop a Meat and Poultry Product Recall Plan](#)  
[FSIS Food Defense Plan Security Measures for Food Defense](#)

Note: You may utilize an outside consultant who is not employed by the establishment. Our Vermont State Meat Inspection has an Enforcement Investigative Analysis Officer (EIAO) who can assist in answering questions with the development of your HACCP Programs.

## **Refusal to Grant Inspection Service**

The Program Section Chief or designee may refuse to grant Vermont State Inspection because an applicant:

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- Does not have a written HACCP system as required by 9CFR part 417 of this chapter;
- Does not have written Sanitation SOPs as required by 9 CFR part 416 of this chapter;
- Does not have a written Recall plan as required by [9 CFR part 418](#)
- Has not demonstrated that adequate sanitary conditions exist in the establishment as required by 9 CFR parts 308, 381, subparts H and I, and 416 of this chapter;
- Has not demonstrated via a written humane handling plan, that livestock & poultry will be handled and slaughtered humanely, as required by [6 V.S.A 3306 \(i\)](#);
- Is unfit to engage in any business requiring inspection as specified in section 401 of the FMIA, section 18(a) of the PPIA;
- If the Secretary refuses to issue a license for inspection, , the applicant will be provided the opportunity for a hearing in accordance with [6 V.S.A 3306\(e\)](#), and the Rules of Practice, [9 CFR 500.7 \(b\)](#).

Refer to [9 CFR 313](#) regarding humane handling of animals while on the inspected premises.

### Additional Resources

[Sample Letters for Approved Water and Sewage](#)

[VT MIS Directive 5220.1](#)

[Food Safety Resources for Small and Very Small Plant Outreach](#)

[Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Parts 300-592](#)

[Vermont Meat & Poultry Inspection](#)

[6 V.S.A Chapter 204 - Preparation of Livestock and Poultry Products](#)