

Guidance for Retail Processing of Meat & Poultry Products



What is the retail exemption from inspection?

All meat and poultry food products are required to be processed under either [VT State Inspection](#) or USDA [Federal Inspection](#), unless it is processed under an exemption. The retail store exemption from inspection allows for meat and poultry products prepared by a retail vendor to be sold direct to consumers, without the need for daily inspection. This includes raw, heat treated, and fully cooked meat and poultry food products; including cooked meals or entrees that are cooled down and/or frozen, packaged, and placed on display for retail sale (not ready for immediate consumption). Meat and poultry products prepared under the retail store exemption from inspection **are not served or delivered to the end consumer for immediate consumption; they typically require further preparation or heating prior to consumption.** For more information about licensing requirements and the difference between the retail store exemption and the restaurant and catering exemption please review our [Guidelines For Prepared Meals & Other Products Containing Meat & Poultry](#).

What is considered a meat or poultry food product?

A food product is amenable (qualifies as a meat or poultry food product) if it contains greater than 2% cooked or 3% raw meat or poultry. This includes but is not limited to raw whole muscle cuts, raw ground meat or poultry, meat and poultry sausages, wraps, burritos, meat pies, soups, dumplings, quiche, empanadas, lasagnas and other meals or entrees containing meat or poultry. There are several exceptions to this rule, including a closed-face sandwich containing meat or poultry and poultry broth. For more information on this please see the section labeled "Amenability" on page 10 in the USDA 2005 [Food standards and labeling policy book](#).

What are the regulatory requirements for operating as a Retail Processor?

The retail processing license allows a person or business to prepare meat and poultry products without the need for daily inspection. There are two retail processing categories that can be applied for based on the size of the meat or poultry product processing and display areas.

- A retail small processor has less than 300 square feet of processing area and a meat display space of less than 20 linear feet.
- A large processor has 300 or greater feet of processing space and 20 or more feet of linear meat display space.

The following are a few of the important regulatory requirements for retail processing licensure. The full listing of the requirements are found in the [retail inspection regulations](#).

- Only USDA or State of Vermont inspected and passed meat and poultry may be used as source material for retail prepared meat and poultry.
- The area that meat and poultry is prepared, processed, offered for sale, and stored in must be separate and have a separate entrance from living quarters as per [CVR 20-023-001](#) Part 305.2(D). **Home kitchens will not be approved for retail processing.**

- The processing area where meat and poultry products are handled and prepared must:
 - Be located inside a clean facility and constructed in a manner that minimizes exposure to contaminants; this includes washable floors and walls.
 - Be separate from the retail space where products will be displayed and offered for sale to the consumers.
 - Not located beneath sewage lines. The drainage of sewer systems must be adequate so that liquid waste is properly removed and does not accumulate in work areas, around premises, or over floors and cause sanitation hazards.
 - Have a dedicated hand washing sink with hot and cold running water, soap, and disposable paper towels.
 - Have washing facilities with ample amounts of hot and cold running water to clean and sanitize equipment and utensils. (a 3-bay sink is recommended)
- Equipment and utensils used in the preparation of meat and poultry must be composed of washable material that is impervious to moisture and maintained in a clean and sanitary manner.
 - Outside equipment used for cooking/smoking meat and poultry must be undercover, protected from the elements (wind, rain, dust, debris, pests etc.) and be located near an entrance to the inside facility with a handwashing sink.
- If the water supply is from a private well, the water must be tested for potability. Recommended testing frequency is at least twice per year or every 6 months.
- Refrigerator/cooler temperatures where meat and poultry is stored and displayed must be maintained at 40°F or less. Product temperature must be maintained during transportation and at farmers markets.
- Product prepared by the retail store must be properly labeled. Please see attachment 1 Labeling Guidance.
 - If affixing labels with a “sell-by date”, a dating policy must be posted where it can be easily read by the consumer. Letter size for the written policy must be at least 3/8 of an inch in size. A separate policy poster must be displayed for every 30 feet of meat display space.
- If the retail area is accessible to consumers and raw whole major muscle cuts of meat or poultry are being sold, nutritional information must be available for consumers. If individual packages of product do not have nutritional information present on their labeling, the following informational posters can be used:

Beef and Veal

Pork and Lamb

Chicken and Turkey

- Vermont rules limit the activities traditionally conducted by retail vendors to:
 - Cutting up, slicing, and trimming carcasses, halves, quarters, or wholesale cuts into retail cuts such as steaks, chops, and roasts, and freezing such cuts;

- Grinding and freezing products made from meat;
- Curing, cooking, smoking, rendering or refining of livestock or poultry fat or other preparations of product, except slaughtering or retort processing of canned products;
 - Retail processors preparing cured and/or smoked meat and poultry products must maintain product formulations to demonstrate those cured products are within the limit of added nitrites and/or nitrates.
 - Retail processors producing ready-to-eat (RTE) products are required to keep records of cooking with respect to the destruction of *Salmonella*. [FSIS Cooking Guideline for Meat and Poultry Products](#)
 - Retail processors producing heat-treated but not ready to eat along with ready to eat products are required to keep records of cooling times in respect to preventing or limiting the growth of spore-forming bacteria and other pathogens. [FSIS Stabilization Guideline for Meat and Poultry Products](#)
- Breaking bulk shipments of products;
- Wrapping or rewrapping products
- Retail vendors are required to maintain records, such as bills of sale or cash register receipts, raw ground beef production records, and product formulations as prescribed in [9 CFR 320.1](#). Please see attachment #2 for more information about ground beef production record keeping requirements.
 - Retail processors preparing cured and/or smoked meat and poultry products must maintain product formulations to demonstrate that cured products.
- **Retail prepared meat and poultry products cannot be distributed into commerce for re-sale.** Sale of meat and poultry products prepared by the retail store can only be sold to:
 - Household consumers
 - Hotels, Restaurants, and institutions (HRI), (total yearly sales to HRI consumers cannot exceed 25% of the retail firm's total sale) **NOTE: Retail exempt store prepared meat and poultry that is cooked, smoked, cured, rendered, or refined cannot be sold to HRIs.**

Attachment 1: Retail Exempt Labeling Requirements

6 V.S.A 3308 prohibits the sale of misbranded meat and poultry products as defined in [6 V.S.A 3302 \(25\)](#) and [9 CFR 301.2](#). The misbranding provisions of the Federal Meat Inspections Act and the [Vermont Meat and Poultry Inspection Laws](#) apply to meat and poultry food products that are prepared under the retail exemption. Labeling of retail exempt meat and poultry food products is enforced by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets MIS Investigators and Inspectors. A retail meat or poultry food product would be misbranded, **if in a package or container**, unless it bears a label showing:

- a) Address Line: the name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor; 9 CFR 317.2(g), 381.122.
- b) Net Weight: an accurate statement of the quantity of the contents in terms of weight, measure, or numerical count; 9 CFR 317.2(h), 381.122.
- c) Safe Handling Statement: any word, statement, or other information (such as Safe Handling Instructions for meat products **that are not Ready-To-Eat**) required by or under authority of the Act; 9CFR 317.2(l), 381.125(b).
- d) Product Name: the common or usual name of the food, if any there be; 9 CFR 317.2(c)(1), 381.117.
- e) Statement of Ingredients: the common or usual name of each ingredient if the product is fabricated from two or more ingredients; 9 CFR 317.2(f), 381.118.
- f) Handling Statement: a handling statement such as “Keep Refrigerated” or “Keep Frozen” if product requires special handling to maintain its wholesomeness; 9 CFR 317.2(k), 381.125(a).

For more information on how to appropriately label retail exempt meat and poultry product please contact VAAFM Meat Inspection Service at: 802-828-2426 or agr.meatinspection@vermont.gov

Attachment 1: Retail Exempt Labeling Examples

Handling Statement

Ex. "Keep Refrigerated" "Keep Frozen"

Keep Refrigerated

Product Name

Sweet Italian Sausage

Statement of Ingredients

Ingredients: pork, salt, garlic, fennel seed, black pepper

Safe Handling Instructions

Not required on ready-to-eat product (Ex. hot dogs, meals or soups with meat etc.)

Safe Handling Instructions

This product was prepared from inspected and passed meat and/or poultry. Some food products may contain bacteria that could cause illness if the product is mishandled or cooked improperly. For your protection, follow these safe handling instructions.



Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave.



Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and hands after touching raw meat or poultry.



Cook thoroughly.



Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.

Address Line

John Doe Grocers
Address
City, State, Zip

Net Weight

Net Weight: 16oz (1 lb.)

Handling Statement

Ex. "Keep Refrigerated" "Keep Frozen"

Keep Refrigerated

Product Name

Pork Dumplings

Statement of Ingredients

Ingredients: flour (Malted barley flour, Niacin (Vitamin B3), Reduced Iron, Thiamin Mononitrate (Vitamin B1), Riboflavin (Vitamin B2), Folic Acid (a B Vitamin)), Ground Pork, Onion, Oil, Curry Powder, Salt, Water

Safe Handling Instructions

Not required on ready-to-eat product (Ex. hot dogs, meals, or soups with meat etc.)

Safe Handling Instructions

This product was prepared from inspected and passed meat and/or poultry. Some food products may contain bacteria that could cause illness if the product is mishandled or cooked improperly. For your protection, follow these safe handling instructions.



Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave.



Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and hands after touching raw meat or poultry.



Cook thoroughly.



Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.

Address Line

John Doe Grocers
Address
City, State, Zip

Net Weight

Net Weight: 16oz (1 lb.)

Attachment #2: Ground Beef Production Records

Fresh Ground Beef Production Log/Tracking List

New Wave Store
123 Main Street
Any town, USA, Zip Code

Date and time of grind	Manufacturer name of source material used for product produced	Supplier lot numbers, product code and/or pack date of source material used	Est. number(s) of est. providing source material	Date and time grinder and related FCSs cleaned and sanitized	Comments
01/01/2020 7:00 a.m.	Beef Round Knuckle Cap Off	Pack Date 12/15/2019 5:06 PM L2 Serial 11005512	Est. 38	01/01/2020 7:30 a.m.	60 pounds

Signature of store management reviewer

Date

9 CFR 320.1(b)(4) requires records to be maintained at all retail locations processing and offering for sale raw ground beef products. The records must be documented for each lot produced and include the following:

- A. The establishment numbers of the establishments supplying the materials used to prepare each lot of raw ground beef product;
- B. All supplier lot numbers and production dates;
- C. The names of the supplied materials, including beef components and any materials carried over from one production lot to the next;
- D. The date and time each lot of raw ground beef product is produced; and
- E. The date and time when grinding equipment and other related food-contact surfaces are cleaned and sanitized.

A lot is the amount of ground raw beef produced during particular dates and times, following clean up and until the next clean up, during which the same source materials are used. The records must be kept at the location where the beef is ground. Such records are required to be maintained for a period of one year after the recorded date of the grinding activity.

A blank example log is provide on the next page.

Fresh Ground Beef Production Log/Tracking List

Date and time of grind	Manufacturer name of source material used for product produced	Supplier lot numbers, product code and/or pack date of source material used	Est. number(s) of est. providing source material	Date and time grinder and related FCCS cleaned and sanitized	Comments

Signature of store management reviewer

Date