

# Custom Exempt Farm Livestock Slaughter

## [9 CFR 303.1 Exemptions](#)

Custom Exempt Livestock slaughter conducted with a mobile unit on-farm must be maintained and operated in accordance with 9CFR [§§ 416.1](#) through [416.6](#) (except for water reuse). Given that the regulations were written for brick and mortar establishments, this document is meant to give information on how these may be applied to a custom slaughter mobile unit.

### Licensing

1. Any person who desires to perform farm custom exempt slaughter must apply to VAAFM for a Custom Slaughterhouse Meat Handler's License.
2. An application for Custom Slaughterhouse [Meat Handler's License](#) is provided by VAAFM and can be found on our website. The application shall show:
  - a. The name, address, and telephone number of the owner;
  - b. The name, address, and telephone number of the operator if it is different than the owner; and
  - c. A brief description of the vehicle to be used, along with the license plate number, in the "Physical Location of Business" field.
3. Custom Exempt Slaughter licenses will be valid for the calendar year, expiring on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Each license must be renewed by January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Change of ownership or change of vehicle license will require a new application to be filed with the Agency.
4. Before issuing a custom exempt slaughterhouse license, VAAFM must inspect the applicant's mobile unit and slaughtering equipment to determine that the vehicle has proper sanitary and mechanical equipment and is capable of being maintained in a sanitary manner.

### Equipment and Sanitation for Farm Custom Slaughter

Each mobile custom slaughter unit must be operated and maintained in a manner sufficient to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and to ensure that product is not adulterated.

The following equipment and sanitation requirements shall apply to custom exempt slaughter mobile units:

- 1. Construction**
  - a. The mobile unit must be completely enclosed, and the enclosed portion must be of sound construction, be kept in good repair, and be of sufficient size to allow for handling, and storage of product in a manner that does not result in product adulteration or the creation of insanitary conditions. The driver's cab and hoist may be excluded from the enclosed portion.
  - b. The enclosed part of the unit must be made of durable materials impervious to water and moisture. The construction must be smooth and be cleaned and sanitized as necessary to prevent adulteration of product or the creation of insanitary conditions.
  - c. The unit must be constructed and maintained so that it excludes dust, dirt, and prevents the entrance of insects and vermin, such as flies, rats, and mice.

2. **Ventilation.** Ventilation in the enclosed part of the unit needs to be adequate to control odors, vapors, and condensation to the extent necessary to prevent adulteration of products and the creation of insanitary conditions.

### 3. **Water**

- a. A water tank should be an integral part of the unit or vehicle. It should carry sufficient quantities of water to use for adequate sanitation for equipment and utensils, to prevent adulteration of product, and prevent the creation of insanitary conditions.
- b. The water used shall be tested for potability and comply with the National Primary Drinking Water regulations (40 CFR part 141).
- c. If a municipal water supply is used to fill the tank, upon request, a water report must be made available to inspection staff that is issued under the authority of the State or local health agency, certifying or attesting to the potability of the water supply. If a private well is used for its water supply, documentation must be made available to inspection staff certifying the potability of the water supply that has been renewed at least semi-annually.
- d. If water from the farm is to be used, it is required to be tested and conform to (b) and (c) above. The use of a garden water hose to deliver the water is not acceptable unless the hose is rated for food contact.

### 4. **Equipment and utensils**

- a. Equipment and utensils used for processing or otherwise handling edible product or ingredients must be of such material and construction to facilitate thorough cleaning and to ensure that their use will not cause the adulteration of product during processing, handling, or storage. Equipment and utensils must be maintained in sanitary condition so as not to adulterate product.
- b. A tripod or rail capable of lifting a carcass to a height that enables the carcass to clear the ground for bleeding and evisceration. This hoist must extend outward from the truck body and if a spreader, hook, gamble, or rack is used to hoist and eviscerate animals it shall be of easily cleanable metal construction.
- c. A sanitation tank large enough to allow complete immersion of each tool used for slaughtering shall be filled during slaughter operations with potable water and maintained at a temperature of at least 180 degrees.
  - i. If 180 degrees F potable water is not available, a cold sterilant approved for food contact surfaces may be used. Contaminated equipment should be thoroughly cleaned using hot water and a cleaning agent, prior to using a cold sterilant.

### 5. **Sanitary operations**

- a. All food-contact surfaces, including food-contact surfaces of utensils, knives, scabbards, saws and equipment, must be cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and the adulteration of product.
  - i. The unit or vehicle must be thoroughly cleaned after each daily use.
  - ii. All tools and equipment must be thoroughly washed and sanitized after each day's operation. They must be washed and sanitized if contaminated with viscera contents, abscesses, or foreign material during slaughtering operations

- b. Non-food-contact surfaces of the enclosed unit, equipment, and utensils used in the operation of the unit must be cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and the adulteration of product.
- c. Cleaning compounds, sanitizing agents, processing aids, and other chemicals used must be safe and effective under the conditions of use. Such chemicals must be used, handled, and stored in a manner that will not adulterate product or create insanitary conditions. Documentation substantiating the safety of a chemical's use in a food processing environment must be available to VAAFM inspection program employees for review.
- d. Product must be protected from adulteration during processing, handling, storage, loading, and unloading at and during transportation. Adequate care shall be taken to prevent contamination of the carcasses from fecal material, ingesta, milk, perspiration, hair, cosmetics, medication, and similar substances.

#### **6. Employee hygiene**

- a. **Cleanliness.** All persons working in contact with product, food-contact surfaces, and product-packaging materials must adhere to hygienic practices while on duty to prevent adulteration of product and the creation of insanitary conditions.
- b. Cleaning agents and paper towels shall be available so hands and equipment may be cleaned as needed.
- c. Hand wash facilities shall be used as needed to maintain good personal hygiene.
- d. **Clothing.** Aprons, frocks, and other outer clothing worn by persons who handle product must be of material that is disposable or readily cleaned. Clean garments must be worn at the start of each working day and garments must be changed during the day as often as necessary to prevent adulteration of product and the creation of insanitary conditions.
- e. **Disease control.** Any person who has or appears to have an infectious disease, open lesion, including boils, sores, or infected wounds, or any other abnormal source of microbial contamination, must be excluded from any operations which could result in product adulteration and the creation of insanitary conditions until the condition is corrected.

### **Slaughtering Procedures of Livestock**

#### **1. Slaughter Area**

- a. The area where slaughter is conducted must be maintained to prevent conditions that could lead to insanitary conditions or adulteration of product.
- b. Operators must make every effort to prevent insects, rodents, vermin, animals (e.g. dogs, cats, racoons, skunks, etc.) and wild birds. The outside must be kept clean and tidy; rubbish must not accumulate, and vegetation must be controlled to avoid harborage and breeding places.
- c. If a slaughter area is used for repeated kills, the area should be maintained to prevent blood from pooling, running off on to adjacent property, or contaminating a water source.

- d. All inedible materials produced through the slaughter activity, such as inedible offal, blood, paunch material, and hides that may cause the slaughter area to become insanitary, be removed from the slaughtering area and disposed of in a sanitary manner and denatured pursuant to [9 CFR 325.13](#).
  - i. Inedible material may be disposed of at a rendering facility, landfill, composting, or another method allowed by law; see [livestock mortalities and disposal](#)
  - ii. If inedible material is to be transported off of the farm, it shall be placed in designated containers and be properly denatured, and the inedible containers shall be clearly marked "Inedible Not For Human Consumption" in letters not less than 4 inches in height.
  - iii. Containers for inedible shall be kept clean and properly separated from edible carcasses to prevent adulteration.

## 2. Humane Slaughter

- a. Each animal shall be rendered insensible to pain by a single blow, or gun shot or electrical shock, or other means that is instantaneous and effective before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.

See the [Humane Methods of Slaughter Act](#)

## 3. Slaughtering Procedures of Livestock

- a. **Hoisting and Bleeding.** Each animal shall be hoisted and bled as soon after stunning as possible to utilize post-stunning heart actions and to obtain complete bleeding. Carcasses shall be moved away from the bleeding area for skinning and butchering.
- b. **Skinning.** Carcass and head skin shall be handled without neck tissue contamination. This may be done by leaving the ears on the hide and tying the head skin. Feet shall be removed before carcass is otherwise cut. Except for skinning and starting skinning procedures, skin should be cut from inside outward to prevent carcass contamination with cut hair. Hair side of hide should be carefully rolled or reflected away from carcass during skinning. When carcass is moved from skinning bed, caution should be taken to prevent exposed parts from coming in contact with adulterating surfaces.
- c. **Evisceration.** Before evisceration, rectum shall be tied to include bladder neck and to prevent urine and fecal leakage. Care should also be taken while opening abdominal cavities to prevent carcass or viscera contamination.
- d. **Carcass washing.** Hair, dirt, and other accidental contamination should be trimmed prior to washing. Washing should proceed from the carcass top downward to move away any possible contaminants from clean areas.
- e. **Carcass Marking.** After slaughter, carcasses must be stamped "**NOT FOR SALE**" on each quarter with letters at least 3/8" in height, or a "Not For Sale" tag shall be affixed to each quarter of beef and each half of pork and sheep or goat.

## 4. Transportation

- a. When a licensee transports uninspected custom prepared meat to a custom exempt establishment for processing, it should be done in a manner whereby product will not be adulterated or misbranded, or mislabeled;
- b. Transport the meat in such a way that it is properly protected, and deliver carcasses in such a way that they shall be placed under refrigeration as soon as possible with product temperatures reaching 40 degrees Fahrenheit within 24 hours after slaughter.

## **Record keeping and Documentation**

1. The Custom slaughterer maintains production records listed in [§ 320.1 Records required to be kept](#), and that also document:
  - a. the number and kinds of custom livestock slaughtered along with the names and addresses of owners of the livestock,
  - b. the ages of slaughtered cattle (less than 30 months or 30 months of age and older),
  - c. the cattle were ambulatory at the time they were presented for slaughter,
  - d. that [Specified Risk Materials \(SRM\)](#) were disposed of properly,
  - e. the custom slaughterer did not observe any condition that would render the cattle unfit for human food, and
  - f. Carcasses and parts are transported on the owner(s)' direction

**NOTE: The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets provides fillable Certificates of Ownership Forms (MI-C1) that capture all of the required record keeping information listed above. These certificates are provided at no charge and are available in triplicate to custom slaughterers.**

2. Additional required documentation includes:
  - a. Test records demonstrating water potability.
  - b. Records to demonstrate that the chemicals used are safe for use in a food processing environment.