

# A Guide for Maryland Department of Agriculture's Rabbit and Poultry Slaughter Requirements

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) offers a voluntary certification program ([http://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/poultry\\_rabbit\\_program.aspx](http://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/poultry_rabbit_program.aspx)) in which participants are permitted to sell their poultry and rabbits anywhere intrastate (within the state) to restaurants and retailers. An additional license from DHMH (Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene) or local health department is required to sell at Farmers' Markets. To qualify for the program you must meet the following requirements:

- Slaughter less than 20,000 poultry per year
- Cannot engage in slaughter, buying, or selling poultry products other than from their own production
- Complete an annual application and submit a fee of \$75.00 for MDA program
- Attend trainings – initial and updates
- Have a Poultry Premise Registration\*

This program requires one person from each facility to attend MDA training, follow basic food safety requirements of the program, and allow MDA access to their facility to conduct inspections. The requirements for direct sales from the farm and sales anywhere intrastate are provided in this factsheet.

## Requirements for Direct Sales of Poultry or Rabbits from the Farm

Continuous inspection by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) is not required if you are producing and processing less than 20,000 birds for meat annually. No permit or fee is required by MDA\*, DHMH or the local health department. For verification of exempt status, contact the USDA/FSIS Raleigh, North Carolina District Office at 1-800-662-7608.

## Requirements for Slaughter and Sale of Poultry to Anywhere Intrastate

Continuous inspection by the USDA FSIS is not required if you are producing and processing less than 20,000 birds for meat annually. A producer must attend MDA's Rabbit and Poultry On-Farm Slaughter/Processing training. Once training is completed, a processing certification application must be completed and submitted to MDA along with a \$75 fee (<http://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Documents/onfarmprocessingapplication.pdf>). This application and fee must be submitted annually to MDA. Both parts and whole poultry and rabbits certified by this program are allowed to be sold.

Meat cannot be ground. Additional permits from DHMH or the local health department are not required for sales on the farm, to retailers, or restaurants. However, a Producer Farmer's Market Mobile license from DHMH is required to sell at farmers' markets.

### **Requirements for Sale of Poultry to Anywhere Intrastate Slaughtered for the Producer by Another Party**

A producer may have his/her poultry or rabbits slaughtered and processed at a plant under continuous USDA inspection, bring the packaged product back to their farm, and sell it anywhere intrastate or interstate. An On-Farm Home Processing license from DHMH ([http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OEHFP/OFPCHS/Shared%20Documents/plan-review/guidelines/ProducerMobileFarmerMarketUnit\\_Guidelines\\_Itrhea.pdf](http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OEHFP/OFPCHS/Shared%20Documents/plan-review/guidelines/ProducerMobileFarmerMarketUnit_Guidelines_Itrhea.pdf)) is required for the on-farm storage of USDA inspected slaughtered and processed meat. A slaughter facility that operates as a FSIS custom exempt slaughter facility cannot be used for the slaughter and processing.

### **Basic Processing Guidelines**

Birds must be processed in a clean environment and in a clean manner so that no feces or contaminants are present on the final product. The presence of feces or other contaminants would constitute an adulterant and would, therefore, subject your farm to scrutiny by the USDA FSIS or the MDA. Additionally, it is not permitted to slaughter sick animals. Packaging can be plastic food grade bags, paper sacks or butcher paper. Once processed, the carcasses must be held at a temperature of less than 40°F until sold. If you process less than 1,000 birds annually and only sell directly to the consumer from the farm, the packaging must contain a label with the name and address of the seller, contents, and net weight. If you process more than 1,000

birds but less than 20,000 birds annually, and only sell directly from the farm you must also include the statement "Exempt-PL-492." If you process less than 20,000 birds annually and plan to sell anywhere intrastate, the packaging must contain a label with the name and address of producer, identity of product, Maryland issued number (this is the number that you received from the MDA, it will be a 3 or 4 digit number preceded by the letter MD; for example MDXXX), net weight, "Exempt PL-90-492", date of slaughter and safe handling instructions. For complete and up to date details regarding slaughter requirements, go to MDA's website at

<http://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Documents/RabbitPoultryProcessingRequirements.pdf>.

### **For More Information**

For more information about poultry and rabbit processing requirements in Maryland, contact the MDA at (410) 841-5769 or go to their website: <http://www.mda.maryland.gov>.

\* All individuals involved in keeping or caring for all types of poultry must register their premises with Maryland Poultry Premises Registration. Anyone owning five birds or more for greater than 120 days in a 12 month period is required to register. More information about this program can be found at <http://mda.maryland.gov/animalHealth/Pages/poultry.aspx> or by calling (410) 841-5810.

Additionally, individuals producing eggs for sale or donation are required to register with MDA annually and this registration also serves as the poultry premise registration.

More information about this program can be found at [http://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/egg\\_inspection.aspx](http://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/egg_inspection.aspx) or by calling (410) 841-5769.

**Jennifer Timmons (jtimmoms1@umes.edu) University of Maryland Eastern Shore  
and Jonathan Moyle (jmoyle@umd.edu) University of Maryland Extension**

This publication, [A Guide for Maryland Department of Agriculture's Rabbit and Poultry Slaughter Requirements](#) (publication number), is a series of publications of the University of Maryland Extension and [Maryland Poultry](#). The information presented has met UME peer review standards, including internal and external technical review. For more information on related publications and programs, visit: [program url](#). Please visit <http://extension.umd.edu/> to find out more about Extension programs in Maryland.

The University of Maryland Extension programs are open to any person and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, and gender identity or expression.