

A Guide to Selling Meat and Poultry Products in Virginia

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)

Office of Meat and Poultry Services

What meat and poultry products need to be inspected by the VDACS Office of Meat and Poultry Services?

The production of meat or poultry products is required to be conducted under inspection unless an exemption allows otherwise. Exemptions still have requirements that must be met; it is not a complete exclusion from all inspection.

All “amenable” species i.e., Cattle, swine, sheep, goats, and poultry (including ratites) slaughtered and offered for sale must be inspected. Ratites include ostrich, emu, and rheas. Products offered for wholesale must be manufactured from inspected and passed carcasses. Some poultry operations which slaughter and/or process poultry may be exempt from inspection if they meet the requirements for the type of exemption they claim.

Nonamenable species are livestock or poultry that do not require inspection under OMPS or USDA laws to sell the meat. However, regulatory oversight is still required for these species. Contact OMPS for assistance determining the appropriate office with jurisdiction. Producers of nonamenable species such as rabbits or bison may request voluntary inspection for their animals. This is a fee-based service and certain regulatory requirements must be met. Rabbit producers may contact the Office of Food & Dairy 804.786.3520 to apply for the Virginia Rabbit Program.

All meat and poultry products offered for sale require regulatory oversight. The purpose of this document is to help identify which office to contact based on the type of business and the intended customer.

Who can sell meat or poultry at farmers’ markets, to restaurants, to retail stores and on the internet?

Anyone who has had their products processed at a USDA/FSIS or VDACS/OMPS inspected facility or has applied and received a grant of inspection from USDA/FSIS or VDACS/OMPS. Persons claiming one of the poultry exemptions may sell their products based on the type of exemption. People selling red meat may be required to apply for a Meat Handlers Permit.

Please contact OMPS 804.786.4569 for more information. Exempt poultry may not be sold across state lines.

People or businesses inspected by the Virginia Department of Health and/or VDACS Office of Dairy and Foods may sell their products. Please contact your local inspector if you have further questions.

How can I tell if products have been inspected?

Only meat and poultry products produced under a Federal or State Grant of Inspection will have labels with inspection legends that indicate the product was inspected. Products inspected under State Inspection cannot be sold across state lines. The number in the legend is specific to the facility where the product was produced.

Restaurants and caterers are inspected by the local Department of Health. Regulations require that only meat and poultry coming from an approved source (inspected) can be used in meals prepared by these businesses.

Retail stores are inspected by the local Department of Health and/or the Office of Dairy and Foods. Regulations require that all meat and poultry sold at these locations must come from an approved source (inspected). Retail stores may further process the inspected meat and poultry.

Do I need to have inspection to sell rabbit meat?

Rabbit producers wanting to sell their products within the Commonwealth of Virginia to restaurants, retail stores, or wholesale are not required to apply to OMPS for a Voluntary Grant of Inspection. They may instead participate in the VA Rabbit Program. For program requirements and application, contact VDACS Office of Food and Dairy 804.786.3520.

Can I sell meat harvested from hunting?

Wild harvested game birds and animals cannot be sold for food. Only meat from domestically raised game birds and animals may be sold. For more information, contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources 804.367.1000.

Can poultry be sold without inspection?

There are specific exemptions to the Poultry Products Inspection Act that allow for individuals or firms to sell their poultry without undergoing inspection. While certain poultry operations may be conducted without inspection, you must meet requirements such as sanitation and recordkeeping. The following statement should be on the labels of exempt poultry offered for sale, "Exempt P.L. 90-492". For more information on the poultry exemptions, please contact OMPS 804.786.4569.

How can I get my facility inspected by OMPS?

Before OMPS can provide inspection, you must meet regulatory requirements. The operator of the slaughter or processing facility must apply for a grant of inspection. By submitting the application, the operator agrees to follow all regulatory guidelines applicable to their operation. Basic requirements for a grant of inspection can be found at this link:

<https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/inspectionguide.pdf>

What requirements does my facility need to meet to get inspection by OMPS?

Facility requirements can be found in Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations. These regulations are generalized and may not address specifics for your type of operation. OMPS can provide basic guidance for the construction of processing and slaughter plants.

Regulations require a physical separation from living quarters. Inspectors, products, equipment, and supplies cannot move through any portion of the area used as living quarters. Therefore, to operate under a grant of inspection from your home, you must comply with this requirement.

I am not slaughtering livestock or offering products for wholesale, who provides inspection for my products?

All meat, poultry, and nonamenable species offered for sale as human food are regulated. Different government agencies may regulate these products depending on the type of food, where it is prepared or where it is consumed. The following section can be used to help decide which office to contact depending on your type of business.

Answer the following questions to determine the type of inspection your business may require.

If you answer "Yes" to more than one question, your business may require inspection from more than one state office or agency.

1. Do you purchase and prepare inspected livestock carcasses and/or inspected meat or meat products and sell these products to consumers at your retail store(s) or outlet(s)?
 - If you answered "Yes", contact the Office of Food and Dairy 804.786.3520 and your local health department.
2. Do you purchase meat or meat products¹ and prepare the products as ready to eat entrees for meals sold directly to consumers?
 - If you answered "Yes", are these meals packaged, labeled, and chilled? If your answer is "No", contact the local health department office. If your answer is "Yes", contact the Office of Food and Dairy 804.786.3520 and your local health department.
3. Do you purchase meat or meat products¹, prepare these products, and the sell them in meals as a catering business?

If you answered "Yes", contact your local health department.

4. Do you purchase meat or meat products¹ and prepare them in a central kitchen for distribution as ready to eat meals or vending machines that you own or operate?
 - If you answered “Yes”, are these meals packaged, labeled, and chilled? If your answer is “No”, contact the local health department office. If your answer is “Yes”, contact the Office of Food and Dairy 804.786.3520 and your local health department.

¹Must start with inspected and passes product or raw product prepared at a retail exempt store.

Individuals considering selling meat and poultry products should:

- **Check** with your local city or county for zoning requirements.
- **Consider** writing a business plan or having someone help you write one before investing money on equipment and facilities.
- **Contact** OMPS to receive a directory of existing facilities. Some of these offer slaughter and processing services.

Helpful links for meat and poultry processors

Business One Stop provides guidance to people wanting to start, grow or expand a business.

[Home](#) | [Virginia Business One Stop](#)

Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network provides guide to small-scale producers

www.nichemeatprocessing.org/get-started



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