



Meat Processing and Inspection Programs in Oregon

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has completed a draft plan to start a state meat inspection program. The following information sheet provides background on the federal and state regulatory system for meat sales, describes the elements of a state meat inspection program, and identifies potential benefits of an Oregon program and the steps to startup an Oregon program.

BACKGROUND

Farmers and ranchers in Oregon raise and sell livestock for a variety of local, regional and international markets. Processing and inspection are necessary steps connecting farms to consumers.

Federal law requires that meat sold for retail/wholesale markets be processed at a federally inspected facility. Currently 27 states have cooperative inspection programs that are equal to federal inspection and are overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA, FSIS) but Oregon does not. This means that facilities in Oregon wishing to sell meat to retail/wholesale markets must be inspected by USDA.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) licenses all processors, both USDA inspected and exempt facilities that are not inspected by USDA. The ODA inspection ensures compliance with construction, sanitation, liquid and solid waste disposal, and animal theft regulations. Exempt facilities that are inspected by ODA but not USDA can only provide custom processing services for the owners of livestock.

INSPECTION IN OREGON

Federal Inspection

- Federal USDA, FSIS inspectors check the health and physical integrity of each animal at the time of slaughter. Oregon has 13 USDA inspected facilities located throughout the state. Federal inspection personnel must be present at all times when livestock are slaughtered and processed and the meat food products must be inspected and approved for human consumption. Inspected facilities must maintain and follow written Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans. Meat products inspected at a USDA facility may be sold locally and outside of Oregon.
- Exemptions: when a federal inspection is not required

Retail Exempt Processing

- Retail establishments such as grocery stores may process meat to sell at their own storefronts that have the same owner as long as the original meat product was processed under federal inspection.
- A retail-exempt processor can also sell a limited amount of product to hotel, restaurant or institutional customers as long as the product has not been cooked, smoked, rendered or refined. These hotel, restaurant or institutional customers may only use these products to make foods for immediate consumption, not further distribution.

Personal/Individual Use Exemption

- Under certain conditions, a person may slaughter/prepare livestock of his/her own raising for the exclusive personal use by the owner, family or non-paying guests without benefit of inspection. Product produced under this exemption cannot be sold commercially.

Custom Slaughter and Processing Facilities

- Oregon has 16 stationary custom-exempt slaughter and processing facilities. Custom-exempt facilities may only slaughter and process livestock for the exclusive use of the owners of the livestock. The custom-exempt facility provides a service for the livestock owner; it is not producing commercial products for sale. Custom-exempt facilities are reviewed periodically by USDA to verify facilities are maintained and operate in a manner that produces a safe, clean wholesome meat food product. They are licensed and routinely inspected by state authorities.

WHAT IS A STATE MEAT INSPECTION PROGRAM?

States may apply and enter into a cooperative agreement with the USDA, FSIS to operate a State Meat Inspection Program equal to the USDA, FSIS federal inspection program. Meat processed and inspected under a State Meat Inspection program may be sold in-state only. The federal Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program allows state-inspected meats from qualifying plants to be shipped across state lines and the state program must meet the higher USDA, FSIS standard or same as.

DOES OREGON HAVE A STATE MEAT INSPECTION PROGRAM?

No, the Oregon State Meat Inspection Program ended in 1971 due to budget constraints. Discussions are underway with a variety of stakeholders to determine whether there is sufficient interest and benefit to explore building Oregon's capacity to process meat in-state.

In 2020, the Oregon Department of Agriculture was given authority to adopt rules to establish an Oregon State Meat Inspection Program.

BENEFITS OF A STATE MEAT INSPECTION PROGRAM IN OREGON

Food safety is the number one priority for meat inspection in Oregon. An Oregon State Meat Inspection Program is not meant to compete with USDA facilities. A State Meat Inspection Program could provide technical assistance to help additional facilities be able to sell to retail or wholesale markets. If additional facilities boost Oregon's processing capacity with the assistance of a State Meat Program, this could:

- Support local, direct to consumer meat sales
- Give producers greater control over the price they receive for livestock
- Diversify processing options and reduce risk of processing bottlenecks
- Help to increase processing capacity
- Allow producers to find a local facility to slaughter and process livestock in remote locations across Oregon
- Reduce transportation time and costs for producers
- Support producers' ability to donate locally produced meat to food banks and other community assistance programs
- Provide wholesale options for value-added meat processors
- Improve inspection options for producers of non-amenable species (e.g. bison, elk, yak)

NEXT STEPS

There are several steps necessary to create and implement a State Meat Inspection Program in Oregon. ODA plans to:

- Continue outreach with Oregon's farmers and ranchers, meat processing establishment and wholesale and retail meat sellers to identify opportunities and assist existing exempt facilities that may be interested to meet USDA FSIS standards.
- Add additional legal authorities and rules
- Develop meat program specific inspection, verification testing, lab analysis protocols, policies and procedures
- Hire staff and complete all required USDA FSIS training
- Use USDA FSIS guidance to train staff to verify humane handling at all facilities
- Ensure compliance and enforcement, civil rights, and financial accountability protocols are at least equal to federal requirements

BUDGET

The Oregon Department of Agriculture was allocated, by the 2020 special session of the Oregon Legislature, \$926,195 and 3 FTE for the startup of the program. This includes the work with USDA, stakeholders, and eventually bringing on a core group of staff in the elements of inspection, veterinary, and laboratory. To have a fully functioning program, ODA estimates an additional amount of approximately \$600,000-\$800,000 in the first year of the full inspection program that includes bringing facilities into the State Meat Inspection framework.

Once USDA approves Oregon's plan and facilities are approved into the program and under cooperative agreement with USDA, 50% of the inspection costs will be supported by USDA funding going forward.

A full budget has not been developed for the other two critical parts of the program. Additional funding will need to be secured to assist facilities with infrastructure costs to meet the USDA facility equal to or same as requirements. This can be very expensive and any funding will need to be in the multi-million dollar range to be effective. In addition, funding will need to be secured to enhance local market activities to assist producers with market development activities and promotions.

Food Safety and Animal Health Program
635 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
503.986.4720 | [Oregon.gov/ODA](https://www.oregon.gov/ODA)