

**Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture**  
**Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services**  
**717-787-4315**  
[www.eatsafepa.com](http://www.eatsafepa.com)

<b>RABBIT &amp; POULTRY SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS</b>
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**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Registration and Fees:** USDA exempt processors, NOT under voluntary USDA inspection/review, who slaughter/process poultry (1000 or less birds), rabbits or other meats for the public must submit a Food Establishment Registration [Application](#) to the Department and be inspected prior to operating. The annual registration fee is \$35. All producers will have routine inspections.
2. Processors must meet all USDA/FSIS inspection exempt requirements. Processors are prohibited from selling adulterated or misbranded product as defined by FSIS.
3. Poultry is sold *intrastate only*. Rabbit not under USDA voluntary inspection may be sold interstate if under FDA inspection.
4. The poultry operator must confirm with PDA that they are under the USDA Exemption Category for 1000 birds or less. Contact USDA/FSIS to determine your exemption category first. A business may not simultaneously claim or operate under more than one exemption.
5. If the slaughter/processing is done off the farm under USDA Voluntary Inspection, but the grower brings inspected meat back to the farm for storage or sale, the storage and/or retail facility must be Registered/Licensed and inspected by PDA.
6. Cold storage areas (any size, any location) not under USDA review or inspection will be required to be Registered and inspected by PDA.
7. Cold storage areas under USDA review/inspection but that hold foods other than the USDA regulated product are required to be Registered and inspected by PDA.
8. **Health/Biosecurity:** No slaughter of sick animals. Animal production living areas must be kept clean and measures in place to minimize rodents. Feed must be kept clean and stored in a way to prevent contamination including from insects and rodents. Withdrawal times for all medications must be followed. For more information on rabbit health see *Rabbit Health Guide*.
9. **Slaughter/Processing Structures or Locations:** Must be in an area protected from potential contamination by weather, insects, wildlife, dirt and filth. Slaughter may occur outside in an area with overhead protection and a solid cleanable floor. Further processing may not occur outside and must be done in a separate area from slaughtering.
  - a. **Slaughter Room:** The floors must be impervious, coved at the wall to floor junctions and sloped to a drain. The walls and ceilings must be smooth and impervious materials. A hot and cold potable water supply must be available.

- b. **Processing Rooms:** The floors must be impervious, coved at the wall to floor junctions and sloped to a drain. The walls and ceilings must be smooth and impervious materials. A hand washing sink must be provided. Hot and cold water must be available for hand washing and equipment washing. Must provide storage for packaging supplies in or adjacent to the processing room.
- c. **Outside areas:** Slaughtering may occur outside. A properly constructed area outside may be used for bleeding (killing cones), scalding poultry (scalding vessel), and de-feathering. There must be overhead protection in the form of a roof with a smooth, impervious and easily cleanable ceiling. The floor must be solid and easily cleanable. There must be access to hot and cold running potable water for cleaning. Care must be taken to slaughter at times or on days where the area is protected from insects, rodents, dust, dirt or other sources of contamination such as poor weather.

***Further processing must occur inside a processing area and not outside.***

- 10. **Equipment:** All equipment must be made of acceptable materials that are easily cleanable, be durable and maintained in good working condition. Cutting boards and/or tables must be fabricated from hardwood, stainless steel, or other approved synthetic materials.
- 11. **Equipment Cleaning:** Equipment that comes in contact with carcasses must be capable of being cleaned and sanitized. Clean in place (CIP), a 3-step cleaning method using a 3-compartment sink, or other acceptable washing and sanitizing procedures must be used. Hot, running, and potable water must be available for equipment washing. Food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized every 4 hours unless otherwise approved.
- 12. **Water:** Only potable water may contact the carcass, food contact surfaces, or equipment, and must be available at hand washing stations. If using a hose, it must be food grade. Unless it is a municipal source, water samples must be tested and meet the drinking water standards and a copy of the test results must be made available during inspection. For non-public water systems not regulated by DEP, ***Initial testing for Total Coliform (4 sequential samples) and Nitrate/ Nitrite (1 sample) must be provided.*** Ongoing testing shall continue with ***quarterly*** Total Coliform and ***annual*** Nitrate/Nitrite testing (*more frequent testing for Nitrate/Nitrite may be necessary based on initial results*).
- 13. **Ice:** If ice is used to chill dressed rabbits or poultry, it shall be manufactured from potable water and handled in a sanitary manner. Re-use of ice is limited: Ice from ice-packed poultry may be re-used to repack raw whole birds or parts. USDA provides guidance on reuse of ice (see Appendix 2 for FSIS Ice Re-Use Guidance).
- 14. **Lighting:** The slaughter/processing areas must have adequate lighting.
- 15. **Toilet and Hand washing Facilities:** Hand washing facilities must be located in the processing area and have hot and cold running water, with soap and disposable paper towels. Anyone involved in the slaughter and processing must have access to a toilet that is equipped with hand washing facilities.
- 16. **Temperatures:** Temperatures of cold holding equipment should be monitored at least daily. Thermometers must be calibrated and the dates of calibration logged. It is highly recommended that equipment temperature logs be kept for your records.

- 17. Meat Temperatures:** The animals must be chilled to 45°F within 4 hours of slaughter if less than 4 pounds, 6 hours of slaughter from 4 to 8 pounds and 8 hours if more than 8 pounds. Monitoring records for cooling should be kept. After chilling, the poultry/rabbit meat must be stored in a cooler at 45°F or less.
- 18. Personnel:** No smoking, eating or drinking while slaughtering, preparing or handling the poultry or rabbits. Smoking, eating and drinking shall occur in a designated area located outside of the processing and slaughtering areas. No one with a foodborne illness, diarrhea, vomiting, open sores or infected cuts on their hands or arms can work in the slaughter/processing area. Clothing must be clean at the start of the process and must be changed if it becomes soiled and inappropriate for other tasks in the slaughter process.
- 19. Compounds:** All non-food compounds used must meet the USDA requirements for the intended use. Proof of compliance with the USDA requirements must be maintained. All compounds must be used properly, labeled accurately and stored appropriately.
- 20. Packaging/Labeling/Weights:** New plastic food grade bags, paper sacks or butcher paper must be labeled with name and address of producer, identity of product, net weight, date of slaughter and safe handling instructions. Poultry must also be labeled with "Exempt PL- 90-492". Products prepackaged for retail sale shall be properly labeled to comply with the Food Code and any FSIS requirements. Labeling examples can be found in Appendix 1.
- 21. Plumbing:** All plumbing shall conform to the state or local plumbing and building codes. Private sewage systems shall be approved by the appropriate sanitary authority.
- 22. Offal and Waste Water disposal:** The facility must comply with all state and local rules relating to waste and refuse disposal. Disposal methods must not contaminate or attract insects or rodents to the slaughter/processing area. No inedible offal shall be held on the premise prior to removal unless it is stored in leak-proof, fly-tight containers. If it is held for longer than 12 hours, a refrigerated inedible offal storage area shall be provided. Waste water shall be disposed of in an approved sewage system or in a manner that complies with all state and local rules. Verification from the local municipality may be requested.
- 23. Animal holding areas:** Except for the day of slaughter, rabbits/poultry must be kept in separate buildings or rooms, so not to contaminate slaughter or processing rooms.
- 24. Recordkeeping:** Records must be kept indicating:
  - a. Poultry/rabbit slaughter dates with number of poultry/rabbits slaughtered each date.
  - b. Number of sick animals segregated from healthy animals.
  - c. Invoicing if selling to retailers or restaurants and/or sales records if selling directly to consumers.

## **POULTRY PRODUCTION:**

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) DOES NOT have a state meat inspection program in which animal health is verified. PDA does not have a poultry inspection program equivalent to the Federal poultry inspection program. As such USDA FSIS is responsible for conducting reviews of establishments operating under exemptions. PDA is not responsible for determining if a USDA exemption exists. Only USDA/FSIS can make that determination.

**PDA is only responsible for the registration and inspection of Producer/Growers under the “1000 or less” bird exemption category. These facilities must be registered and inspected by PDA. All other categories are reviewed/inspected and regulated directly by USDA, FSIS.**

All growers/processors inspected by PDA (those that fall under a USDA exemption category of 1000 birds or less) must comply with all of the USDA exemptions criteria and be compliant with all PDA food processing and sanitation requirements as outlined above. Title 9 CFR Part 416 contains the regulatory requirements for a poultry business receiving full USDA FSIS inspection and **is applicable to poultry exempt operations**. 9 CFR Part 416 can be accessed at the following website: [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov). In addition, specific sanitary practices are described in FSIS’s *Sanitation Performance Standards Compliance Guide*, dated October 13, 1999 (click [here](#) to download a pdf copy).

It is the responsibility of the grower/producer to verify independently that the birds are in good health in any PDA registered/inspected poultry operations. PDA does not provide this service. Unhealthy birds may not be slaughtered and used for human consumption.

Below will generally summarize USDA poultry **exemption criteria for 1000 or less birds**, however any poultry exemptions should be discussed with USDA FSIS for further details.

All 5 criteria must be met in order to qualify for a Producer/Grower **1000 or less bird exemption**:

- i. The poultry grower slaughters no more than 1,000 healthy birds of his or her own raising in a calendar year for distribution as human food;
- ii. The poultry grower does not engage in buying or selling poultry products other than those produced from poultry raised on his or her own farm;
- iii. The slaughter and processing are conducted under sanitary standards, practices, and procedures that produce poultry products that are sound, clean, and fit for human food (not adulterated);
- iv. The producer keeps records necessary for the effective enforcement of the Act [Title 9 CFR 381.175]; and
- v. The poultry products do not move in commerce. Only **intrastate** sales may occur. You may sell to customers, hotels, restaurants, institutions, distributors and retail food stores.
- vi. There are no specific USDA labeling requirements. Note: PDA requires pre- packaged product sold direct to the consumer to be labeled with Name of the Product, Ingredients (if applicable), Name and Address of the Producer/Processor, net weight, and safe handling instructions.

**RABBIT PRODUCTION:**

Rabbit is not mandated by Congress to be inspected under either the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA FSIS); therefore, inspection of rabbit at the federal level is voluntary. FSIS does provide for a voluntary inspection of rabbit. If however, a producer does not produce rabbit meat under FSIS voluntary inspection the processor would be subject to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspection under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. The FDA has jurisdiction over the shipment of rabbit meat in interstate commerce.

1. **Rabbit producers not under USDA voluntary inspection should contact FDA to have their businesses registered with FDA as a food producer. You can register on-line at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FoodFacilityRegistration/ucm2006832.htm>**
2. **Any producer of rabbit in PA not under the USDA voluntary inspection program, regardless of FDA inspection for interstate commerce, would additionally be required to be registered and inspected by PDA. As a registered and inspected entity a rabbit producer can sell the meat to the public within Pennsylvania.**
3. **\*All producers of rabbit meat must have an antemortum and postmortem examination of each rabbit by an approved veterinarian or veterinarian designee. A veterinarian can perform the actual ante and post mortem exam or they may designate in writing another individual as competent to perform ante or post mortem examinations of the rabbits. Proof of these examinations and appointment of competent designee, if applicable, must be kept on file with the processor.**
4. The Sanitary Requirements as noted in 9 CFR Ch. III, §354.210 - §354.247 are the best practices for rabbit production and are generally summarized above. 9 CFR Part 354, can be found at [www.ecfr.com](http://www.ecfr.com)

\*Note: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) DOES NOT have a state meat inspection program in which animal health is verified. Any producer selling interstate should be aware that other states may not accept the PDA inspection as meeting the requirements of the FDA Food Code 3- 201.17(A).

USDA- "Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing Operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act"  
[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/Poultry\\_Slaughter\\_Exemption\\_0406.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0406.pdf)

For questions regarding USDA exemptions contact a USDA District Office. USDA FSIS District office covering Pennsylvania:

Mellon Independence  
Center 701 Market Street  
Suite 4100-A  
Philadelphia PA 19106-1576  
Phone: 215-597-4219, Ext 101  
or 1-800-637-6681

APPENDIX 1

**USDA Exempt Poultry and Rabbit Slaughter and Processing Packaged Product Label  
- EXAMPLES -**

**Random Weight Example-Poultry**

**Random weight** – each package is weighed and labeled with the actual net weight. Tare (package material) must be deducted to get net weight. No package can weigh less than the labeled weight. The total price is calculated by multiplying the actual weight times the price per lb. The unit price must be displayed as price per pound.

**Standard Weight Example-Poultry**

**Standard weight** – each package is labeled with the same weight. No package can weigh less than the stated weight. Tare (package material) must be deducted to get net weight. Not required to show price per lb.

Fresh Whole Chicken  
Poultry Farm X  
123 Park Way  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Slaughtered 4/30/2012  
Exempt PL-90-492  
Net Weight: 3.32 lbs  
Unit Price: \$2.50 PER LB  
TOTAL \$8.30

**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.

Fresh Whole Chicken  
Poultry Farm X  
123 Park Way  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Slaughtered 4/30/2012  
Exempt PL-90-492  
Net Weight: 3.00 lbs  
TOTAL \$7.50

**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.

**APPENDIX 1**

(Continued)

**Random Weight Example- Rabbit**

Fresh Whole Rabbit  
Rabbit Farm Z  
456 Park Way  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Slaughtered 4/30/2012  
Net Weight: 3.32 lbs  
Unit Price: \$2.50 PER LB  
TOTAL \$8.30

**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.

**Standard Weight Example- Rabbit**

Fresh Whole Rabbit  
Poultry Farm Z  
456 Park Way  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Slaughtered 4/30/2012  
Net Weight: 3.00 lbs  
TOTAL \$7.50

**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.

**Registered and inspected Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture operations may additionally at to their labels: "Reg. Penna. Dept. of Agr."**

## APPENDIX 2

### FSIS Ice Re-Use Guidance

FSIS has developed the following guidance for water, ice and solution reuse.

Ice from ice packed poultry may be reused to repack raw whole birds or parts. The following are recommended:

- Establish a procedure to assure that ice is collected and held in a container that drains freely and in a sanitary manner. The procedure should address collection and washing of ice before it is reused.
- Establish a procedure for identifying reused ice from fresh ice.
- The ice or the product should be packaged in an impervious, sealed container, such as a plastic bag, to prevent direct contact between the product and ice.
- Ice used on raw product should not be reused on any partially- or fully-cooked product.
- The ice should be free of any observable foreign material as well as large particles of poultry meat and fat. If the ice is washed, continuous drainage should be maintained during the washing procedure.
- Ice from damaged containers should not be used.
- Establish procedures to correct deficiencies that occur and to prevent reoccurrence.

### The Bureau of Food Safety & Laboratory Services Contact Information

**MAILING ADDRESSES:     The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture  
                                  Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services**

Followed by the address below....

**Region 1** (Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren)  
**13410 DUNHAM RD. MEADVILLE, PA 16335   814-332-6890   Fax: 814-333-1431**

**Region 2** (Cameron, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Northumberland, Montour, Potter, Snyder, Tioga and Union)  
**542 COUNTY FARM RD, SUITE #102, MONTOURSVILLE PA 17754   570-433-2640   Fax: 570-433-4770**

**Region 3** (Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming)  
**RT 92 SOUTH, PO BOX C, TUNKHANNOCK PA 18657   570-836-2181   Fax: 570-836-6266**

**Region 4N/4S** (Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington and Westmoreland)  
**226 DONOHOE RD. SUITE 101. GREENSBURG, PA 15601   724-832-1073   Fax: 724-832-1013**

**Region 5** (Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin and Somerset)  
**Martinsburg Commons 403 E. Christiana St. Martinsburg, PA 16662   814-793-1849 Fax: 814-793-1869**

**Region 6W/6E** (Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lebanon, Lancaster, Perry, Schuylkill and York)  
**ROOM 100, 2310 NORTH CAMERON ST., HARRISBURG PA 17111   717-346-3223   Fax: 717-346-3229**

**Region 7** (Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia)  
**1015 BRIDGE RD, COLLEGEVILLE PA 19426   610-489-1003   Fax: 610-489-6119**