

Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations Meat and Meat Products



Alberta 
Government

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Meat and Meat Products Overview

Farm direct marketing is the sale of food products directly to the consumer at a farmers' market, roadside stand, farm store, u-pick operation or public market, on-line or through community supported agriculture (CSA). Successful farm direct marketing involves consistently supplying safe, high-quality products in a clean, customer-friendly environment that supports the development of a trust relationship between you (the supplier) and your customers.

Producers and processors must be aware of the federal and provincial legislative requirements that must be met for producing and marketing agri-food products. Agri-food products are those food products that are made using agricultural products, ingredients or processes. You need to know and adhere to the legislation that applies to your farm direct marketing operation. Failure to comply with the legislation may lead to fines or other penalties and possibly, to decreased sales.

You also need to be aware that the rules change depending on the marketing channel and venue location. What is an acceptable, even desirable, product at a farmers' market may not be allowed for sale to a restaurant, public market or on-line. For example, your natural beef products that sell out at the local farmers' market cannot be sold to a restaurant in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, if the slaughter was done at a provincial abattoir in Alberta. Requirements for licences, permits, packaging, grading and inspection vary with the avenue used to get your product to market and the market location.

Legislation also has different requirements for the construction and operation of the facilities used to produce your products. For example, inspected frozen beef cuts can be stored in a freezer in your home, but then you can only sell them at an Alberta approved farmers' market. If you want to sell your beef to a restaurant or on-line, then you will need to have a dedicated storage area, in your home or on the farm, that is permitted by Alberta Health Services.

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Introduction to Meat and Meat Products

This booklet highlights sections of the pertinent legislation that applies to the production, processing and sale of meat and meat products regardless of where and how they are sold. As a producer or processor who direct markets agri-food products, you need to become familiar with all the legislation that applies to your operation.

It is important to remember that federal law takes precedence over provincial law, which, in turn, takes precedence over municipal bylaws. Different acts and regulations often work together to define requirements.

An act is a written law or statute that has been enacted by a legislative body such as Parliament or the Legislative Assembly. A regulation, sometimes referred to as subordinate legislation, defines the application and enforcement of an act and is made under the authority of the act.

Both pieces of legislation have an effect on your business. In some cases, the regulation may be more pertinent, such as the Food Regulation under the *Public Health Act*. The *Public Health Act* does not directly address farmers' markets, but the Food Regulation contains an entire Part that outlines the requirements for a market.

Legislation Affecting Production

Animal Welfare

Protecting animal welfare is a shared responsibility between government and industry. The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits anyone from wilfully causing animals to suffer from neglect, pain or injury. The Criminal Code is enforced by police services within Alberta.

Federal

The federal Health of Animals Regulations under the *Health of Animals Act* governs the humane treatment of animals during transport within Canada. While loading or unloading an animal, you cannot beat or handle it in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering. Under this legislation, you should not be transporting animals of different species or of substantially different weight or age unless those animals are segregated. The transportation of a female animal and its suckling offspring are exempt from this Regulation.

To assist you as a producer in addressing animal welfare issues, the livestock industries have developed guidelines for the care and handling of animals. These codes of practice promote sound management and welfare practices through recommendations and requirements for housing, handling, transportation, processing and other animal husbandry practices.

Provincial

The *Animal Protection Act* (Alberta) prohibits a person from placing an animal in distress and is enforced by a number of agencies, including the Alberta SPCA. Peace officers can enter property, other than a dwelling, to investigate whether animals are provided with adequate care and are not abused or subjected to undue hardship, privation or neglect. Animals in distress or abandoned animals may be taken into custody or euthanized.

As the owner or the person in charge of an animal, you must do the following:

- ensure the animal has adequate food and water
- provide the animal with adequate care when the animal is wounded or ill
- provide the animal with reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold
- provide the animal with adequate shelter, ventilation and space

The Animal Protection Regulation prescribes conditions for the loading and transporting of livestock. It is unlawful to beat or, by use of a prod, goad or other instrument, injure livestock being loaded into or unloaded from a vehicle.

Vehicles used to transport animals must meet the following conditions:

- can contain the livestock at all times
- are large enough to transport all the animals without causing injury or undue suffering due to crowding
- are high enough for all the livestock to stand in their natural position without coming into contact with a deck or roof
- protect them from exposure to extreme injurious heat or cold or exhaust fumes
- provide adequate ventilation
- will not injure the animals because of broken, cracked or damaged siding or flooring material or exposed fittings, bolt heads or other objects projecting into the area where the animals are held

Vehicles used to transport animals must meet strict conditions to ensure animal welfare.

The Regulation also prohibits the sale of young animals at livestock markets. Foals must be more than 30 days old, weaned pigs must weigh more than 10 kilograms and any other species that is weaned must be more than 8 days old.

Animal Health

Federal

The purpose of the federal *Health of Animals Act* (Canada) and Regulations is twofold:

- prevent the introduction of animal diseases and toxic substances into Canada
- prevent the spread within Canada of diseases of animals and toxic substances that either affect human health or could have a significant economic effect on the Canadian livestock industry

Reportable diseases are outlined in the Act and Reportable Diseases Regulations and are usually of significant importance to human or animal health or to the Canadian economy. You or your veterinarian are required to immediately report the presence of an animal that is contaminated or suspected of being contaminated with one of the designated diseases to a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) district veterinarian. Control or eradication measures will be applied immediately.

Provincial

The purpose of the provincial *Animal Health Act* (AHA) and Regulations is to minimize the impact of animal diseases in agricultural animals in Alberta and to enhance market access, public health and food safety through effective disease control measures.

This Act enables a rapid, effective response to an animal disease occurrence by authorizing control measures against disease spread, animal disease surveillance, traceability systems, carcass disposal provisions, livestock market inspection and licensing as well as control of the sale of production animal medicines.

The Reportable and Notifiable Diseases Regulation designates certain diseases as reportable or notifiable. You, as the owner of an animal, or your veterinarian must advise the Chief Provincial Veterinarian of suspected or confirmed reportable or notifiable diseases within 24 hours by calling 780-427-3448 during regular business hours or 1-800-524-0051 (toll-free) after hours.

“Reportable diseases” refers to diseases that are threats to market access, animal or public health or the economy. These diseases require immediate action to control or eradicate them. Diseases designated as “notifiable” are monitored for trade purposes and to study their incidence and distribution within Alberta. Notifiable diseases do not require control actions but are important to monitor for changes or unusual trends.

Traceability

Traceability is the ability to follow an item or a group of items, such as an animal or food products, from one point in the supply chain to another. The three pillars of livestock traceability are premises identification, animal identification and animal movement. The federal *Health of Animals Act* (Canada) governs livestock traceability activities in Canada.

To ensure an effective, rapid response to animal emergencies in livestock, including disease outbreaks, the provincial *Animal Health Act* establishes the necessary infrastructure and traceability systems within Alberta.

Traceability measures assist with an effective, rapid response to animal emergencies:

- livestock disease outbreaks
- emergency situations like flood or fire where animals are affected

Premises Identification

Premises Identification (PID) is a way of linking livestock to land locations or premises. Livestock animals include cattle, bison, pigs, sheep, goats, horses, llamas, rabbits and cervids such as deer and elk. Under Alberta’s Premises Identification Regulation, if you own a livestock animal and that animal is kept at a premises other than a commingling site, you need to apply for a PID Account and obtain at least one PID Number associated with where the animal(s) are located. A PID Number is a unique identifying number assigned to a specific piece of property and/or operation. You must keep the information on your PID Account up-to-date.

If you operate commingling sites (a site where animals of more than one owner are housed together, such as a fairground, auction market or stable), you are also required to obtain a PID Account, register all your commingling sites and inform the animal owners of the PID Number for those sites.

Animal Identification

Many commodity groups have legislated animal identification requirements that are governed provincially and/or federally. Part XV of the federal Health of Animals Regulations under the *Health of Animals Act* outlines the requirements for the identification of cattle, bison and sheep and for the reporting of their movement. These animals must be identified with a federally approved tag before leaving the site where they were born (farm of origin).

All bison must be tagged with the approved CCIA RFID tag when leaving their farm of origin. Sheep and lamb must bear an approved Canadian Sheep Identification Program ear tag before they leave their farm of origin. Cervids, under the provincial *Livestock Industry Diversification Act* (Alberta), must be identified with an approved tag in each ear.

Under Alberta's Traceability Cattle Identification Regulation, which supports Canadian requirements, all cattle born on or after January 1, 2009, must be identified with an approved Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag before 10 months of age or before leaving the farm of origin, whichever occurs first.

The tags are printed with a unique identification number that is both species specific and then animal specific once the number is recorded. Approved tags must be applied to the animals' ears before the animals are transported. You cannot transport the animal to the abattoir and then give the operator the tag.

Swine identification requirements are governed both federally, under Part XV of the Health of Animals' Regulations (*Health of Animals Act*), and provincially, under the Swine Traceability Regulation (*Animal Health Act* Alberta).

An approved swine identifier is required for swine moving from one premises to another. The type of approved swine identifier, commonly a tattoo or tag, is regulated by the type of movement as well as the type of swine. For example, swine moving from farm to slaughter require a tattoo or approved ear tag. For information on approved swine identification, please contact Alberta Pork at 1-877-247-7675.

Animal Movement

Under Alberta's *Livestock Identification and Commerce Act* (LICA), Alberta cattle, horses and sheep must have the appropriate documentation accompanying the animals when they are transported within and outside the province. Livestock Identification Services Ltd. (LIS) is responsible for transportation documentation under LICA, including the Alberta Livestock Manifest, Livestock Permit and Special Permit. For more information about the required documentation, please visit the website at www.lis-alberta.com or call 1-866-509-2088.

Swine movement is governed both federally, under Part XV of the Health of Animals' Regulations (*Health of Animals Act*), and provincially, under the Swine Traceability Regulation (*Animal Health Act* Alberta). The provincial requirements regarding Alberta swine and deadstock movement must be followed by shippers, transporters and receivers of swine in Alberta. All swine and deadstock movement from one premises to another must be accompanied by a Swine Manifest that is to be submitted to Alberta Pork.

As Alberta's swine movement database uploads data to meet federal requirements to the federal database (PigTrace), a single, national system is achieved. For information on swine movement reporting, please contact Alberta Pork at 1-877-247-7675.

The federal Health of Animals Regulations requires cervids to have a Transportation Authorization Permit issued by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency before transport.

For more information on traceability related legislation or species-specific information, please visit the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development website at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/traceability or call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll-free at 310-FARM (3276).

Branding and Sales

The goals of the provincial *Livestock Identification and Commerce Act* (LICA) and Regulations are to facilitate fair commerce, protect personal property and promote integrity within the livestock industry. These goals are achieved by specifying the rules concerning livestock brands, livestock transactions, transportation, inspection of livestock, dealing in livestock and livestock products as well as recourse against fraudulent or dishonest dealing in livestock. Under the legislation, branding only applies to cattle and horses.

When livestock are sold, the sales transaction must be documented in writing by either a bill of sale prepared by the seller or a settlement statement prepared by the purchaser or a livestock dealer on behalf of the seller or the purchaser. All the provisions of LICA apply to cattle and horses while only select provisions apply to sheep and swine.

All livestock sales transactions must be documented in writing.

An Alberta Livestock Manifest is required to transport all cattle, sheep and horses in the province with the exception of horses being transported for a purpose other than sale or slaughter. All cattle and horses leaving the province must be inspected prior to leaving. The manifest is also required for sheep transported to a destination outside of Alberta.

Livestock Identification Services Ltd. has the legislated responsibility to provide livestock inspection services. The brand registry and the inspection system offer protection to all livestock owners against strayed or stolen livestock.

Cervid Production

The *Livestock Industry Diversification Act* (LIDA) gives authority to farm deer, elk and moose (collectively known as cervids) in Alberta, and the *Wildlife Act* and Regulations may also apply in some circumstances.

The Livestock Industry Diversification Regulation prescribes which species of domestic cervid animals can be farmed and which products from these animals may be sold. The Regulation also specifies the requirements of the licence fee, registration and identification of farms and animals, farm containment areas, records and reports, slaughter, velvet antler removal and processing.

You must be licensed by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) to operate a domestic cervid production farm, and each animal must be registered and identified. Handling facilities and fencing must meet specific requirements before a licence is issued. Under the legislation, all game animals must be slaughtered in a licensed facility if you intend to sell the meat. The heads of all cervids slaughtered on the farm must be submitted to ARD for chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing.

A domestic cervid animal that is registered may be sold and moved provided the producer has the appropriate movement permits from the CFIA and reports the transaction to ARD.

Manure Management

To ensure environmental protection, the provincial *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA) sets manure management standards for all operations in Alberta that handle manure. The legislation includes a permitting process for confined feeding operations. The permit requirements are based on the number of animals the operation manages; these requirements are different for each livestock type. For example, a small beef operation with less than 200 feeders does not require a permit, but the operation is expected to meet the manure management requirements of the Act.

The Act defines siting and construction standards for manure storage and collection facilities for all permitted operations. The legislation addresses the application of manure to agricultural land and ensures environmental protection through an approval process that involves municipalities and directly affected neighbours.

AOPA also sets out a framework for resolving conflicts between agricultural producers and the public relating to nuisances such as odour, dust, noise and smoke resulting from agriculture activities.

Deadstock Disposal

Under Alberta's Destruction and Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation of the *Animal Health Act*, the owner of a dead animal shall dispose of the carcass within 48 hours of its death. Depending on the circumstances, the dead animals can be composted, incinerated, buried, rendered or naturally disposed of as specified in the Regulation.

Proper carcass disposal is important for both the prevention of livestock disease transmission and the protection of air and water quality. Access to carcasses by scavengers is only permitted under the guidelines for natural disposal. If your animal has been euthanized with drugs or other chemical substances, you must take immediate steps to prevent scavengers from gaining access to the carcass.

When an animal is known or suspected to have died from an infectious disease or reportable disease, the owner of the animal shall dispose of it in accordance with the directions issued by the CFIA or the Chief Provincial Veterinarian. Such an animal cannot be disposed of by natural disposal.

The Regulation also pertains to the disposal of inedible offal or condemned material from animals slaughtered.

Marketing Commissions

The *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* (Alberta) provides the framework for agricultural marketing commissions. Within the parameters of the legislation, each commodity commission develops a set of governing regulations.

Any person who produces, markets or processes a regulated product is required to comply with the regulations and to provide the appropriate agricultural marketing commission any information or record relating to the production, marketing or processing of the regulated product.

Regulation	Regulated Products	Agricultural Marketing Commission
Alberta Beef Producers Plan Regulation	cattle, beef, offal, hides, other by-products	Alberta Beef Producers
Alberta Elk Plan Regulation	elk, meat, offal, hides, velvet antler, hard antler, genetic products, embryos, body secretions, body fluids, body tissues and other by-products	Alberta Elk
Alberta Lamb Producers Plan Regulation	sheep, sheep carcass (parts and whole), wool	Alberta Lamb Producers
Alberta Pork Producers' Plan Regulation	swine	Alberta Pork Producers' Development Corporation
Bison Producers of Alberta Plan Regulation	bison, meat, offal, hides and other by-products	Bison Producers of Alberta

On-Farm Food Safety Programs

On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) programs reduce the risk of unsafe food products originating from the farm. The programs help create a proper operational environment for food safety on the farm through the implementation of Good Production Practices (GPPs). These types of practices can be applied to any type of agricultural production operation.

The key practices:

- a thorough knowledge of the hazards and risks on the farm
- a good understanding of the GPPs recommended for the commodity and type of farming operation
- an effective written plan for the individual farm

Commodity associations are in varying stages of developing programs for OFFS. These national standards programs are managed by producer groups and are voluntary for most commodities.

The following table shows the OFFS programs available in the livestock sector.

Commodity	OFFS Program	Commodity Association
Beef	Verified Beef Production	Alberta Beef Quality Starts Here
Bison	Canadian Quality Bison	Canadian Bison Association
Cervids	Under development	Canadian Cervid Alliance
Lamb	Food Safe Farm Practices	Canadian Sheep Federation
Pork	Canadian Quality Assurance	Alberta Pork
Veal	Verified Veal	Ontario Veal Association

More information about these on-farm food safety programs is available on the websites of the commodity associations. (Website links are given in the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this booklet.)

Legislation Affecting Slaughter and Processing

Slaughter

The *Food and Drugs Act* (FDA) is the main piece of federal legislation relating to food safety. The Act prohibits the sale of unsafe food products in Canada. All meat sold in Canada must comply with this legislation, regardless of where it is processed. Animals must be slaughtered at either a provincially or a federally registered establishment.

All food sold in Canada must comply with the *Food and Drugs Act* and Regulations.

The federal *Meat Inspection Act* (MIA) regulates the import, export and interprovincial trade of meat products. The Act and the Meat Inspection Regulations deal with the registration of establishments, the inspection of animals and meat products in registered establishments as well as the standards for federally registered establishments and for animals slaughtered and meat products prepared in those establishments. Meat and by-products cannot be transported out of the country or to another province unless the product was inspected, handled and stored in federally registered facilities.

Meat and by-products, including rendered fat and lard used as an ingredient, cannot be transported to another province unless the product was inspected, handled and stored in federally registered facilities.

If the meat will only be sold within Alberta, the slaughter and processing can be done at a provincially licensed facility. The provincial *Meat Inspection Act* (Alberta) applies to all provincially licensed meat facilities. The Act regulates the slaughter, processing, preparing, packaging and storing of meat. It is illegal to sell or offer for sale uninspected meat.

Under the provincial Act, you can sell, offer for sale, transport or deliver meat to any person who is not a member of your immediate household only if all the following criteria are met:

- the animal must be inspected by an appointed inspector
- inspection must take place both before and after slaughter
- the slaughter must take place at an abattoir
- the carcass must be found to be fit for consumption

The provincial Meat Inspection Regulation (Alberta) allows a mobile butcher to slaughter your own animals on your premises or assist you in slaughtering your own animals on your premises, but this meat can only be used by you or members of your immediate household. This meat cannot be sold, bartered or given away.

You cannot sell your animals and have customers conduct the slaughter at your farm.

Wild game can be processed at a licensed meat facility, but the meat is for use by the hunter and the hunter's household members only. Wild game meat cannot be used as an ingredient in meat products that are sold, such as sausages or jerky, because this meat has not been inspected. Under the *Wildlife Act* and Regulation, wild game meat cannot be sold.

All meat approved for sale at provincially licensed facilities must carry an "Alberta Approved" Inspection Legend. The Inspection Legend may be placed directly on the carcass or meat or on the packaging. The Inspection Legend is unique to each licensed meat facility and must contain the number assigned to the facility.



Figure 1. The "Alberta Approved" Inspection Legend

Ritual or religious slaughter can be conducted at a licensed abattoir provided the following conditions are met:

- an experienced individual performs the slaughter
- the operator of the abattoir has permission to conduct such a slaughter
- the animal is handled and slaughtered with minimum pain and distress

Processing

Requirements for processed meat products are governed by the federal and provincial *Meat Inspection Acts* and their Regulations, the federal *Food and Drugs Act* (FDA) and Regulations (FDR) and the provincial Food Regulation under the *Public Health Act* (Alberta).

Under the FDA, you are prohibited from selling meat that fits any of the following criteria:

- has in or on it any poisonous or harmful substance
- is unfit for human consumption
- consists in whole or in part of any filthy, putrid, disgusting, rotten, decomposed or diseased animal or vegetable substance
- is adulterated
- was manufactured, prepared, preserved, packaged or stored under unsanitary conditions

Primary processing, which includes cutting and boning, and further processing, such as curing, cooking, smoking, fermenting and grinding, can only be done in licensed or permitted meat facilities. Meat handled in provincially licensed/permitted facilities can only be sold in Alberta.

The processing of any inspected meat on your farm intended for sale at other than an Alberta approved farmers' market (for example, curing, smoking, drying, sausage making, etc.) requires a permit from Alberta Health Services (AHS). You should contact the public health inspector in your area in the early stages of planning your meat processing business to discuss requirements. Meat facilities must be approved by AHS before you can begin operating.

If you wish to market your meat or meat products in other provinces, your products must be processed in a federally registered facility. A list of federally registered meat facilities is available on the CFIA website.

To market your meat or meat products in other provinces, your products must be processed in a federally registered facility.

The Uniform Meat Cut Nomenclature System (UMCNS) specifies, within the federal Meat Cuts Manual, the common names for meat cuts that must be used in labelling all beef, veal, pork and lamb meat cuts. The primary objective of the UMCNS is to ensure that meat that is cut and offered for sale is properly identified in a meaningful and uniform way. The UMCNS is not meant to restrict acceptable meat cutting practices.

UMCNS recognizes that other cutting methods exist and are allowed provided that the meat is properly identified in accordance with the common names and definitions contained in the Meat Cuts Manual. The definitions in the manual establish limits within which these cut names may be used.

The CFIA has produced a manual of Meat Hygiene Procedures that contains information covering the preparation of meat products, such as cooking and cooling temperatures and handling of ready-to-eat meat products. Although the manual applies to federally registered establishments, processors should follow the recommended practices to reduce the risk of food safety hazards.

The federal Food and Drug Regulations (FDR) and the Meat Inspection Regulations (MIR) address the identity requirements for processed meat products. The legislation defines a variety of meat products, for example, sausage and preserved meat (cured, smoked, etc.) and the standards for permitted fillers, additives and preservatives that can be used. The Regulations also specify how much meat and protein must be present in various named processed meats such as headcheese.

The MIR also define the maximum amount of fat that can be present in ground meats:

- extra lean ground – maximum 10 per cent fat
- lean ground – maximum 17 per cent fat
- medium ground – maximum 23 per cent fat
- regular ground – maximum 30 per cent fat

Legislation Affecting Marketing

Labelling

The food label is one of the most important ways of communicating product information to your customers. It is also one of the main sources of information buyers use to make informed purchasing decisions.

A label as defined in the federal *Meat Inspection Act* includes any legend, word, mark, symbol, design, imprint, stamp, brand, ticket or tag or any combination thereof that is or is to be applied or attached to, or included in, or that accompanies or is to accompany any meat product, package or animal.

Detailed information about general label requirements can be found in the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) publication *Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – Food Labels, Agdex 844-2*. This meat publication focuses on specific requirements for the labelling of meat and meat products that are in addition to the general labelling requirements.

Specific requirements for labelling meat apply over and above the standard requirements for food labels.

Federal legislation does not require grade information to appear on the label of prepackaged beef cuts or in advertising. Under the *Canada Agricultural Products Act (CAPA)*, grade names are a protected national trademark. Anyone other than a grader is prohibited from applying or using a grade or any design that resembles a grade stamp to market their meat. Grading is not required for farm direct meat sales in Alberta.

The *Food and Drugs Act*, *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act* and *Meat Inspection Act* and their Regulations set out specifications for mandatory label information for all meat products:

- common name of the product
- net quantity in metric units
- dealer (processor or producer) name and mailing address
- list of ingredients in descending order of amount
- allergen labelling
- nutritional labelling unless exempt
- storage instructions including durable life date
- Meat Inspection Legend
- bilingual labelling unless exempt

Common Name

Federal legislation requires all meat cuts, organs and other carcass parts be identified on labels with proper common names. All meat cuts, except beef, must include the species name. For example, the term “veal” must appear in conjunction with the term “sirloin” when a veal sirloin roast is offered for sale. However, the term “beef” need not appear on the label of a beef sirloin roast.

If a meat portion has been significantly modified by cutting or removing certain portions, the common name must reflect this modification. For example, a complete portion of “sirloin tip” from which the “eye of sirloin tip” has been removed must be labelled “sirloin tip, eye removed,”

Meaningful modifiers such as “boneless” and non-descriptive modifiers such as “New York” may be used in conjunction with the required specific terms provided they are not deceptive or misleading. “Boneless rump roast” and “New York striploin” are examples of acceptable modifiers.

Grades apply to carcasses only and have not been established for meat cuts. Therefore, a statement such as “Canada AA sirloin steak” is not acceptable. However, you could state that your sirloin steaks were “cut from Canada AA beef” if the steaks were cut from carcasses graded Canada AA.

The FDR and MIR establish composition and labelling requirements for meat products to which phosphate salts and/or water have been added. These regulations establish minimum meat protein content and labelling requirements.

When phosphate salts and/or water have been added to a meat product, their addition must be reflected in the common name of the product, unless the product is cured, preserved or prescribed in Schedule I of the MIR. The use of the term “seasoned” in conjunction with the product’s name is acceptable when phosphate salts alone or with water have been added (for example, seasoned pork cutlets). “Seasoned” is also acceptable on a label when spices are added with water.

The label of these prepackaged meat products must also have a statement of the “% meat protein” as part of the common name of the product on the principal display panel of the package. The common name and percentage protein must be grouped together on the label with no information between them, for example, “Marinated Pork Back Ribs – 15% meat protein.”

The type must be at least as legible and conspicuous as any other type on that display panel and in letters that are a minimum of half the size of the letters used in the rest of the common name of the product. The type height cannot be less than 1.6 mm (1/16 inch) in height. Statements such as “minimum meat protein XX%” or “meat protein XX%” are acceptable.

Net Quantity

The net quantity of a meat product must be shown in metric units. When the net quantity is shown in both metric and Canadian (previously named “imperial”) units, the metric units should be declared first, and the two must be grouped together on the label with no information between them.

The net quantity shall reflect the actual quantity of meat and not include the weight of any water, brine or vinegar that is packed with the meat. A minimum type height of 1.6 mm (1/16 inch), based on the lowercase letter “o,” is required for all information in the net quantity except for the numerals that are to be shown in bold face and type size that is proportional to the principal display panel.

Dealer Name and Address

Either the complete name and address of the business that prepares the meat product or the words “prepared for” before the name and address of the firm for whom the meat product is produced or labelled must appear on the label of meat products.

List of Ingredients

All ingredients and their components (ingredients of ingredients) of a meat product must be listed in descending order of proportion by weight as measured before they are combined to make your product. Water and smoke are considered ingredients and must be listed. Ingredients must be declared by their common names in the list of ingredients on a food label.

Water and smoke are considered “ingredients” in a meat product and must be listed on the food label.

A filler may be listed as an ingredient, followed by a listing of all the components between parenthesis, for example, filler (wheat flour, skim milk powder, etc.), or the components making up the filler may be listed individually as ingredients.

Allergens

Ten substances have been identified as most frequently associated with food allergies and allergic-type reactions. Here are the substances, often referred to in Canada as priority food allergens:

- eggs
- milk
- mustard
- peanuts
- seafood (including fish, crustaceans and shellfish)
- sesame seed
- soy
- sulphites
- tree nuts
- wheat and other cereal grains containing gluten

You are required to include these allergens in the list of ingredients on the labels of meat products when they are present as ingredients or components. Processors must pay special attention to ingredients that are added through the use of mixtures and preparations (for example, flavouring and seasoning preparations). Any allergens in fillers such as toasted wheat crumb must be declared.

Where priority food allergens may inadvertently be present in a food, a precautionary statement must be used following the ingredient list. Examples of precautionary statements:

- “may contain X”
- “not suitable for consumption by persons with an allergy to X”, where X is the name by which the food allergen is commonly known

For example, it would be acceptable to use a “may contain wheat” statement on a beef burger product where the product is processed on the same piece of equipment as another product and where there may be a possible transfer of wheat to the final product. Precautionary statements must be truthful and clear and are not a substitute for good manufacturing practices.

When an allergen is likely to be present in a product, the use of a precautionary statement is not acceptable, and the presence of the allergenic ingredient must be accurately declared on the label.

It would not be acceptable to have a “not suitable for consumption by persons with an allergy to wheat” statement on a sausage label when the sausage contains barley, which is a gluten source.

A precautionary statement is not allowed on a label for a product that sometimes contains a food allergen ingredient and sometimes does not; the allergen ingredient must be declared.

Nutrition Labelling

A nutrition facts table is required on meat with added phosphates and/or water. The FDR exemption for raw, single ingredient meats does not apply to meats with phosphates and/or water added. Prepackaged ground meats and ground meat by-products must always carry a nutrition facts table.

Storage Instructions

All consumer and bulk containers used with edible meat products must be labelled with storage instructions unless the meat contained is one of the following shelf-stable types:

- commercially sterile meat products in cans, jars or pouches (excluding pasteurised products)
- dried meat products with a water activity (a_w) value of 0.85 or less
- meat products that have a pH value of 4.6 or lower
- meat products packed in a 100% brine solution
- fermented meat products that have a pH level of 5.3 or less and an a_w of 0.90 or less – The pH of 5.3 or less is achieved at the end of the fermentation period.

All edible meat products not considered to be shelf stable must be labelled with storage instructions that consist of one of the following statements: “keep refrigerated” or “keep frozen,” whichever is applicable.

If the MIR applies, the storage instructions shall be shown on the principal display panel. The instructions may appear on any part of the label, except the bottom, for products from a provincially licensed facility.

The words “previously frozen” must appear on the principal display panel or on an adjacent sign if frozen single ingredient meat and its by-products have been thawed prior to sale.

Customers need to know if a meat product has been previously frozen or if it must be kept frozen or refrigerated.

The words “best before” and “meilleur avant” followed by the durable life date must appear on the label of a prepackaged meat product where the durable life of the meat product is 90 days or less.

All meat products produced in federally registered facilities shall be labelled with the production date or with a code identifying the production lot. This code or date of production must appear on the immediate container of prepackaged meat products or on a tag attached to it.

Meat products produced in provincially inspected facilities are required to record the production date or lot code. This coding system allows you to document the amount of product produced and trace products in the event of a recall.

Meat Inspection Legend

All labels used on meat products produced in a registered establishment must include the Meat Inspection Legend. The “Alberta Approved” Inspection Legend is used to identify meat produced in a provincial meat establishment and is applied at the abattoir. The Legend indicates that the meat has been inspected and is approved for sale within the province.

The Inspection Legend may be applied directly to the meat product as a stamp or placed on the packaging. If the carcass is too small for a stamp, for example, domesticated rabbits, a breast tag with the Legend printed on it can be used.

Bilingual Labelling

All mandatory information on food labels must be shown in both official languages except for the name and principal place of business of the company or person who produced or processed the product. This information can be in either English or French.

There is an exemption for bilingual requirements for some farm direct products considered to be local products. A local product means a prepackaged product that is produced or processed and sold only in two possible locations:

- the municipality in which it is processed or produced
- one or more municipalities immediately adjacent to the one in which it is produced or processed

Label Claims

A claim is any statement, image or advertising that states, suggests or implies that a food product has particular qualities relating to its origin, nutritional properties, composition, processing, nature or any other quality. There are very specific conditions that must be met if you are going to make any type of claim about your meat product.

According to the *Food and Drugs Act* and Regulations, you cannot process, sell, label, package or advertise any food in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an incorrect impression regarding its character, value, quantity, composition, merit or safety. The *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act* prohibits you from applying a label to any prepackaged food product for sale or advertising that contains false or misleading information relating to the product.

Additional information about food claims and the types of claims that can be made about food products, such as organic, can be found in the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) publication *Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – Food Claims*, Agdex 844-3. This publication focuses on additional requirements for claims specific to meat and meat products.

The claims “lean” and “extra-lean” may only be used on foods meeting the definition in the Food and Drug Regulations for meat, meat by-product, prepared meat and prepared meat by-products. In order to make the statement that your meat product is lean, the meat cannot be ground, and it must contain 10 per cent or less fat. To make the claim that meat is “extra lean,” the meat must not be ground and must contain 7.5 per cent or less fat.

Note that the above definitions of “lean” and “extra lean” do not apply to ground meats, which are subject to the standards for ground meats as outlined in the Processing section above. Ground meat must be identified by one of the following claims, depending on the fat content: regular, medium, lean or extra-lean.

Fat claims regarding the fat content of ground meats are subject to different standards than those for meat, meat by-product, prepared meat and prepared meat by-products.

Claims such as “contains not more than X% fat” or “contains less than X% fat” are acceptable. The claim must be verified, and the label must comply with nutritional labelling. Labels with claims such as “XYZ Packers Lean Ham” are not acceptable.

The use of superlatives such as “First Choice” or “Best Quality” in the name of a meat product is only acceptable if the superlative is preceded by the name of the firm manufacturing the meat product or by the name of the firm for which a meat product is prepared. For example, “A.Z. Packers Best Quality Wieners” is acceptable whereas “Best Quality Wieners” is unacceptable as a name.

Descriptions such as “100% Beef Sausage,” “All Beef Sausage,” or “Pure Pork Sausage” are acceptable provided the meat product ingredients come exclusively from the animal species indicated. If making this type of claim for sausages, the source of the casing must also comply with the statement. For instance, when claiming “100% Beef Sausage,” you cannot use a natural casing derived from any other animal species. However, an edible collagen casing or any other artificial casing is acceptable.

In the case of meat patties, the modifiers such as “100%” or “Pure” are acceptable for use in the product name if the following two conditions apply:

- the meat product ingredients come only from the animal species indicated
- the qualifying phrase “with seasoning added” appears in close proximity to the product name

For example, “Pure Beef Patties with Seasoning Added” or “100% Pork Patties with Seasoning Added” are acceptable statements. These modifiers are permitted only for sausages and patties and not for other meat products.

Retail Sales

The *Alberta Public Health Act* and Food Regulation (FR) govern establishments in the province where food intended for public consumption is handled. Food manufacturers, food distributors, grocery and farm stores, food vehicles, restaurants, caterers, farmers’ markets, public markets and other food establishments come under this Regulation.

Commercial food establishments are required to have a food handling permit and follow the Food Regulation as well as the Food Retail and Foodservices Code. Selling your meat and meat products through an on-farm store requires that your operation has a valid permit that must be renewed annually and may be subject to an annual fee.

The Food Regulation outlines basic requirements regarding the construction, maintenance and operation of permitted facilities. Establishments must be approved by Alberta Health Services (AHS) prior to operation; therefore, you should contact your public health inspector/environmental health officer in the early stages of planning your food business to discuss requirements.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with all applicable legislation, which includes zoning bylaws and building, fire, electrical, plumbing, ventilation and licensing codes. Whether you are starting a new business or altering an existing one, AHS will need to approve the building plans and specifications before construction begins. If you open a food business before getting health approval and a valid business licence, legal action against you may be the result.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with all applicable legislation.

Meat intended for sale must be stored in a separate refrigerator or freezer. It may not be stored with the family's personal food. The freezer or refrigerator must be kept in an area that is clean and free of rodents and any potential food safety hazards. Frozen meat products must be stored at a temperature that will keep the products frozen.

If you sell your meat at Alberta approved farmers' markets **only**, you do not require a food handling permit from Alberta Health Services. If you intend to sell your meat at the farm gate, in public markets, to restaurants and institutions or online, you will require a food handling permit for the storage and transport of the meat to your customers.

If you handle, repackage, portion or cut any unwrapped product, then these actions are considered to be processing. To process, you will require a distinctly separate area of your home or farm that will be considered a food establishment, and this area must meet all AHS requirements.

Frozen meat must be kept frozen during transport. When storing or transporting fresh product, it must be chilled and kept at a temperature of 4°C or cooler.

The vehicle used to transport the meat to market or your customers also falls under the food handling permit. It should be thoroughly cleaned prior to loading for each market. Hazardous materials and pets should never be in the vehicle used to transport food products.

Food safety training is mandatory when operating a commercial food establishment. If you have five or fewer food handlers, the individual responsible for the care and control of the establishment must have successfully completed a recognized food sanitation and hygiene training program. If six or more staff are working on the premises at any time, then at least one onsite supervisor must be trained. If you are selling your meat products only at an Alberta approved farmers' market, you are required to complete the Farmers' Market Food Safety Home Study Course.

Additional Resources

All federal legislation can be found on the website for the federal Department of Justice at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng>

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) at www.inspection.gc.ca

Alberta North Office
(north of Innisfail/Bowden)
Tel: 780-395-6700

Alberta South Office
(south of Innisfail/Bowden)
Tel: 403-299-7680

CFIA has developed the Industry Labelling Tool, a food labelling reference. This tool replaces the Guide to Food Labelling and Advertising and provides consolidated, reorganized and expanded labeling information. The tool can be found on the CFIA website at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/eng/1383607266489/1383607344939>

Alberta's provincial legislation is available to view or print for free on the website for the Queen's Printer at <http://www.qp.alberta.ca>

Additional Resources (continued)

Alberta Health Services (www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp)

The general contact numbers for Alberta Health Services Zone offices:

North Zone, Environmental Public Health Grande Prairie – Tel: 780-513-7517	Edmonton Zone, Environmental Public Health Edmonton – Tel: 780-735-1763
Central Zone, Environmental Public Health Red Deer – Tel: 403-356-6366	Calgary Zone, Environmental Public Health Calgary – Tel: 403-943-8053
South Zone, Environmental Public Health Lethbridge – Tel: 403-388-6689	

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (www.agriculture.alberta.ca)

For toll-free calls in Alberta to Government of Alberta offices, dial 310-0000, followed by the area code and the telephone number.

For information on other publications available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, go to www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications or call 780-427-0391 (toll-free: 1-800-292-5697).

Alberta Ag-Info Centre provides access to specialists, information and services within Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. Toll-free in Alberta: 310 FARM (310-3276)

Animal Health and Laboratories Division

Chief Provincial Veterinarian
Tel: 780-408-8345

Animal Health Branch
Tel: 780-427-6535

Inspection and Investigation Branch
Tel: 403-755-1474

Environmental Stewardship Division

Agri-Environmental Management Branch
Tel: 780-422-4844

Food Safety and Animal Welfare Division

Meat Inspection Branch
Tel: 780-422-2104

Safe Food and Animal Welfare Branch
Tel: 780-427-4054

Livestock Research and Extension Division

Livestock and Farm Business Branch
Tel: 780-968-6556

Traceability Branch
Tel: 780-643-1572

Rural Development Division

Farmers' Market Program
Tel: 780-853-8223

Livestock Identification Services Ltd. (<http://www.lis-alberta.com>)

Tel: 1-866-509-2088

On-Farm Food Safety Programs

Alberta Beef Quality Starts Here (<http://www.beefsafety.ab.ca/>)

Canadian Cervid Alliance (<http://www.cervid.ca>)

Canadian Sheep Federation (<http://www.cansheep.ca>)

Alberta Pork (<http://www.albertapork.com>)

Ontario Veal Association (<http://www.ontarioveal.on.ca>)