

## Custom Exempt Operations Requirements Checklist

There are many steps to take prior to opening for business as a Custom Processor / Retail Exempt Establishment. Below we have outline most of the steps that must be taken prior to applying for a license with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Meat, Poultry & Egg Inspection Program. This list is not all inclusive; there may be additional steps that are required by local city or county ordinances. Please review this information and contact all agencies involved to ensure a smooth transition into business. Our Meat Inspectors will work with you throughout the process.

### Building Permit / Zoning

- Check with City/ County or other Local Authority for all applicable permits and zoning requirements before you dig.

### Other Codes to Consider

- Fire
- Electrical
- Occupancy

### Plan Review

- Plan Review for a Custom Processor is done informally with the Dairy and Meat Inspection Program at MDA.
- Prior to construction**, all plans should be submitted to ensure your plan meets regulatory requirements.
- Any facilities that will also operate as a retail establishment **must** complete an official plan review for the retail portion of the facility as required by the MN Food Code – see the website for an application [New Plan Review - Retail Food Establishment](#)

### City/Well Water

- Separate from home well/water source
- City water is tested once per year for coliforms.
- Well water is tested twice per year for coliforms.
- Submit samples to an Approved/ Accredited laboratory for testing.

### Septic System or Sewer Hook-Up

- Separate from home
- Approved by County, Township, or City Health Dept.
- A letter from the applicable authority must be provided to MDA verifying that an adequate waste water handling system is installed.

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## Plumbing System

- ❑ Contact the Department of Labor and Industry for current procedures and requirements
  - Call 651-284-5063 or visit the [MN Department of Labor and Industry Website](#)
- ❑ The plumbing plan **must** be submitted by a licensed plumber to the Department of Labor and Industry.
- ❑ Plan approval must be granted by Department of Labor & Industry **prior to installation**.

## Sink Requirements

- ❑ Must have separate sinks:
  - **3-compartment sink** – for washing equipment and utensils
  - **Hand wash sink** – in each processing or slaughter room for hand washing only.
  - **Mop/service sink** – for cleaning floors

## Facility Requirements

**All surfaces must be constructed of smooth, easily cleanable, non-porous, non-absorbent materials.**

- ❑ Walls and ceiling would have to be finished with approved materials. (Glassboard, enameled metal, ceramic tile, etc.) No exposed wood is permissible.
- ❑ Floors must be maintained in good repair and easily cleanable. Concrete is an option but it must be sealed.
- ❑ The processing facility would have to be divided into at least two rooms.
  - The first room would be dedicated for killing and dressing. A hand wash sink must be provided for food handlers in this room.
  - The second room would be dedicated for processing the carcasses and meat products that are manufactured. A hand wash sink must be provided for food handlers in this room also.

## Basic Requirements for Operating Under the Custom Exemption

### Sanitation:

- ❑ Sanitation procedures and maintenance of facilities during slaughtering and processing must be accomplished in a manner to ensure the production of wholesome, unadulterated product. 9CFR416.1 – 6.
- ❑ Provide this department with a written outline of your facility/equipment cleaning program/schedule.
- ❑ All carcasses must be **visibly** free of fecal contamination.

### Water supply:

- ❑ Potable water must be used in areas where animals are slaughtered, eviscerated, and dressed, and where edible products are processed, handled and stored. The distribution system within the establishment must preclude contamination of the water supply.

### Sewage and Waste Disposal:

- ❑ Sewage and waste disposal systems must properly remove sewage and waste materials – manure, feces, feathers, paunch, trash, garbage, and paper – from the establishment. Systems must be approved prior to operation by local authorities.

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## **Pest Control:**

- ❑ The establishment's pest control operation must be capable of preventing product adulteration. Establishment management must make every effort to prevent entry of rodents, insects, or animals into areas where meat products are handled, processed, or stored. Openings (doors and windows) leading to outside or to inedible areas must have effective closures and completely fill the opening. Areas inside and outside the establishment must be maintained to prevent harborage of rodents and insects.

## **Inedible Material Control:**

- ❑ The inedible material control program must prevent the diversion of inedible animal products into human food channels.
- ❑ **Containers supplied by a rendering company may not be relabeled and used as edible food handling containers.**

## **Marking and Labeling Control:**

- ❑ All custom carcasses and packaged product must be marked "NOT FOR SALE"
- ❑ Livers, hearts, and tongues must also be legibly marked as "NOT FOR SALE" before they leave the kill floor. – They must be returned to the owner of that animal or disposed of as inedible material.
- ❑ All custom processed meat must be returned to the owner of the animal.
- ❑ All shipping containers of poultry products must bear the producers name and address and the statement "Exempted –P.L. 90-492.

## **Raw Pork and Processing Control:**

- ❑ Meat food products containing raw pork must be treated to destroy trichinae (excluding fresh pork products as defined by section 318.10 of the regulations) and are subject to the control of restricted ingredients.
- ❑ Poultry products containing pork as an ingredient are subject to the same trichinae treatment requirements as those specified in section 318.10 of the regulations for meat products consisting of mixtures of pork and other ingredients.

## **Records and General Operation:**

- ❑ Custom processing records need to be kept of all animals accepted into the facility, a book is available from the MDA.
- ❑ Facility must provide adequate separation of retail and custom product if both are present.
- ❑ Custom product cannot be sold as retail or wholesale product.
- ❑ Smokehouse records must be maintained documenting cook time.

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## License/Permit Requirements:

- ❑ Retail Food Handler's license – Issued by MDA for either a retail or custom operation – the fee is dependent upon the gross annual sales expected for the year. The license runs for 1 year starting on July 1, xxxx through June 30, xxxx, license fees are not prorated if you start your business mid-year.
- ❑ Custom Processing Permit – Issued by MDA – (no fee)
- ❑ No license needed for deboning, cutting or wrapping venison. A license is required if you will be making venison sausage (any added ingredients).
- ❑ The MDA must inspect your facility before a license can be issued. When your facility meets the requirements of this department as outlined above, this department will accept your application for the appropriate license and will process it forthwith.

## Additional Requirements if also operating as Retail Exempt

- ❑ All Current Retail Requirements must be met in all areas used to produce retail product.
- ❑ HACCP plans need to be developed and implemented for any retail cured, smoked, and/or vacuum-packaged products
- ❑ Use only USDA or MDA (Equal To) Inspected meat in the preparation of retail exempt products
- ❑ Retail exempt product must have a label to include:
  - ❑ name of product
  - ❑ net weight
  - ❑ ingredients statement
  - ❑ manufacturer's name and address
  - ❑ safe handling statement (if applicable)
  - ❑ Keep refrigerated or keep frozen statement

## Abbreviations:

**MDA** = Minnesota Department of Agriculture

- ❑ For **Meat Inspection / Custom Processing** contact the Dairy & Meat Inspection Division at (651) 201-6300
- ❑ For a **Retail Exempt facility** requirements contact Food & Feed Safety Division at (651) 201-6027

**DLI** = Department of Labor & Industry

**USDA** = United States Department of Agriculture

**FSIS** = Food Safety and Inspection Services

**HACCP** = Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points

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**For Additional Information:** [MDA.MeatPoultryEgg@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.MeatPoultryEgg@state.mn.us)

651-201-6300 • Dairy and Meat Inspection Division • 625 Robert Street North, Saint Paul, MN 55155-2538

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In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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