

Slaughtering Animals on Farms

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Most animals are harvested in meat processing plants. Plants follow specific food safety- standards and requirements to ensure meat products produced are safe. However, Federal and State laws do allow slaughter on-farms in some situations. This document provides additional information on these requirements and their application in common situations.

What kind of slaughter activities are legally allowed on farms?

1. Processing of a person's own animals, of his own raising exclusively for use by the owner and members of the owner's household, nonpaying guests and employees; or
2. The custom slaughtering of an animal, which is then subsequently delivered for processing to a custom exempt permitted plant and returned to the owner for exclusive use by the owner and members of the owner's household, nonpaying guests and employees.

These exceptions are noted in both Federal (9 CFR 303.1) and State laws (Minn. Stat. 31A.15). Please note, in both situations, the animals may only be processed for the owner's use, to include members of their own household, nonpaying guests and employees.

Can a farmer sell an animal to an individual and allow the individual to slaughter it at their farm?

No, this practice is not allowed under the exemptions that allow farm slaughter. The exemption given for the owner (farmer) of the animal specifically requires that the animals be "of his own raising". Simply transferring ownership to another individual just prior to slaughter does not satisfy this requirement. The exception for the owner of the animal was traditionally meant for livestock producers to slaughter their own animals on their farm premise.

Can a livestock producer sell an animal to an individual and then slaughter it for them on their farm?

This practice would only be allowed if the livestock producer is a licensed custom exempt slaughter plant. Minnesota does have custom exempt slaughter plants on farms, or where live animals are kept for individuals to purchase and then slaughter on-site. Without a custom exempt processing plant, the producer cannot slaughter animals for individuals, other than household members, non-paying guests and employees. By providing the property or premise for the slaughtering activities for other individuals, the livestock producer falls into the custom exempt processing category and would then require a license.

Are there other factors livestock producers should consider?

The process of slaughtering animals has many inherent food safety risks. Raw meat is always a possible vehicle for food safety pathogens, such as Salmonella or E. coli. Slaughtering animals in facilities or locations that are not clean or sanitary adds further risk. Individuals who provide unlicensed facilities or conduct slaughter outside of the regulatory requirements should consider the legal liabilities they incur, particularly if an individual becomes ill from consuming this food. While the licensing of a meat processor does not guarantee food safety, it does help ensure that minimum sanitary standards are being met during the harvesting of food.

For Additional Information

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