

## **Meat & Poultry Official Inspection: Frequently Asked Questions**

Operating a meat and/or poultry processing or slaughter establishment under an official grant of inspection has many benefits. These benefits include: product will bear the official mark of inspection and can be sold wholesaled, consumers look for the mark of inspection when selecting meat and poultry products, and products have been produced under safeguards to help ensure it is less likely to be contaminated with bacteria. Let's look at some frequently asked questions about operating under an official grant of inspection.

### **Do I have to pay a fee to operate under official state inspection?**

No, not for typical inspection procedures, since inspection is government mandated to produce "inspected and passed" products, the government pays for all fees. The only time the North Dakota Meat and Poultry Inspection Program imposes a fee is if your establishment chooses to field kill under inspection, if you choose to operate under inspection outside of normal operating hours, or if your establishment would choose to operate on a state observed holiday.

### **How often does the inspector come to my plant once I start operating as an official establishment?**

The inspector will be at your plant at all times while you are slaughtering animals under inspection. The inspector will be at your establishment once per shift when you are processing under inspection, they may stay the entire time you are processing or they may not, depending on their schedule.

### **What does the inspector do while at my establishment?**

The NDMPIP utilizes a program called Public Health Information System (PHIS) which generates tasks for inspectors to complete. These tasks include verifying the SSOP and HACCP plans are being implemented as written, verifying facilities are in good repair and kept under sanitary conditions, checking to make sure labels are up to date and include all ingredients, and various other tasks. In addition to these tasks during an inspected slaughter shift, the inspector will verify the health of all animals presented for slaughter using an ante mortem (before death) and post mortem (after death) inspection. The ante mortem inspection process involves viewing all sides of the animal(s) at rest and moving. Post mortem inspection involves analysis of several body systems in the animal to determine health.

### **What happens if my establishment fails to follow a part of the SSOP, HACCP, or other requirement on an inspection day?**

Depending on the seriousness of the failure one several things may happen: If plant personnel took appropriate corrective action and documented it, the inspector will verify this. If personnel did not take corrective action, or if the inspector finds the failure before plant personnel, the

inspector may issue a noncompliance record. A noncompliance record documents the failure and requires plant management to respond in writing to fix the failure and prevent reoccurrence. If product is adulterated or misbranded the inspector may apply a retain tag and require that affected product is held until determined safe or is correctly labeled. Additional enforcement actions may be taken if serious failures occur or if failures become repetitive.

**My inspection days are Monday and Tuesday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., if I don't finish packaging inspected product by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday can I finish it Wednesday morning?**

No, not unless you get written approval to operate outside of normal inspection hours. This decision is based on your inspector's schedule and the relief inspectors' schedules.

**Can my establishment produce retail product on non-inspection days?**

Yes, as long as the product does not bear the inspection legend (North Dakota Inspected and Passed).

**Can I sell "North Dakota Inspected and Passed" product across state lines?**

The North Dakota Meat and Poultry Inspection Program has implemented a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program (CISP) with the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS). An establishments must apply to operate under this agreement before they ship their product across state lines.

**Is there a limit to the amount of "North Dakota Inspected and Passed" product that I can sell?**

No, the normal retail quantity limits and HRI limits do not apply to product produced under inspection.

**Can my establishment process product under official inspection and slaughter under custom exemption?**

Yes, as long as there is adequate sanitation and separation by time and/or space between operations and products.

**If I slaughter an animal under custom exemption can I process it under official state inspection?**

No, meat and meat parts from animals slaughtered under custom exemption can only be returned to the owner of the animal and cannot be further processed under official state inspection or retail exemption.

**I had my animal slaughtered at an "inspected" plant but when I received my wrapped meat products they were marked "not for sale" why is this?**

All meat processing and slaughter plants are "inspected." If you're animal was slaughtered and processed under custom exemption the final packages will bear "not for sale" and this product

cannot be sold or donated. If you want to sell the final product you need to have your animal slaughtered and processed under official (state or federal) inspection. There are a limited number of plants that slaughter under [official inspection](#). Animals slaughtered and processed under official inspection will bear an inspection legend that reads “inspected and passed” and will not read “not for sale.”

**How long do I have to retain records?**

HACCP records must be retained for the following timeframes:

Slaughter: at least one year.

Refrigerated product: at least one year.

Frozen, preserved, or shelf stable products: at least two years.

SSOP record must be maintained for at least six months.

SRM records must be maintained for at least one year.

For more information regarding official inspection, custom exemption, or retail exemption contact the North Dakota Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Inspection Program at 1-800-242-7535 or 701-328-2231.