A Guide to Virginia’s Meat and Poultry Inspection Program

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)  
Office of Meat and Poultry Services

The goal of the Office of Meat and Poultry Services (OMPS) is to ensure the production of safe, wholesome and truthfully labeled meat and poultry products as well as humane treatment of the livestock that are processed. OMPS provides inspection service to individuals or companies that slaughter and/or process meat and poultry products.

What meat and poultry products need to be inspected by the VDACS Office of Meat and Poultry Services?

All “amenable” species – cattle, swine, sheep, goats and poultry (including ratites).

All food products containing at least three percent raw or two percent cooked meat and/or poultry offered for sale.

Who can sell meat or poultry at farmers’ markets, to restaurants, to retail stores and on the internet?

Anyone who has had their products processed at a USDA/FSIS or VDACS OMPS inspected facility. Products inspected only by the state cannot cross state lines.

How can I tell if products have been inspected?

Meat and poultry products produced under inspection will have labels with inspection legends that indicate that the product was passed and inspected. The legend also indicates if the product was produced at a federally inspected or state inspected facility. The number in the legend is specific to the facility where the product was produced.

For a complete list of nonamenable species, contact OMPS. Producers of nonamenable species such as rabbits or bison may request voluntary inspection for their animals. This is a fee-based service and certain regulatory requirements must be met.
Wild harvested game birds and animals cannot be sold for food. Only meat from farm raised game birds and animals may be sold.

**Can poultry be sold without inspection?**

There are specific exemptions to the Poultry Products Inspection Act that allow for individuals or firms to sell their poultry without undergoing inspection. The following statement should be on the labels of exempt poultry, “Exempt P.L. 90-492”.

While certain poultry operations may be conducted without inspection, you must meet other requirements. For more information on the poultry exemptions please contact OMPS.

![Image of poultry processing facility]

**How can I get my facility inspected by OMPS?**

Before OMPS can provide inspection you must meet regulatory requirements. The operator of the slaughter or processing facility must submit an application for a grant of inspection. By submitting the application, the operator is agreeing to follow all regulatory guidelines applicable to their operation. Basic requirements for a grant of inspection can be found at this website: [http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/inspection.pdf](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/inspection.pdf)

**What requirements does my facility need to meet in order to get inspection by OMPS?**

Facility requirements can be found in Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations. OMPS can provide basic guidance for construction of processing and slaughter plants.

Regulations require a physical separation from living quarters without openings that directly or indirectly communicate with any part of the building used as living quarters. In order to operate under a grant of inspection from your home, you would must comply with this requirement.

Non meat or poultry foods and nonamenable species may require inspection in order to offer them for sale. Different government agencies may regulate these products depending on the type of food, where it is prepared or where it is consumed. To find out more about requirements for foods that do not contain meat or poultry, contact your local health department or the VDACS Food Safety and Security Program at 804.786.3520.

For individuals considering selling meat and poultry products:

- Check with your local city or county for zoning requirements.
- Consider writing a business plan or having someone help you write one before investing money on equipment and facilities.
- Contact OMPS to receive a directory of existing facilities. Some of these offer slaughter and processing services.

**Helpful links**
Business One Stop provides guidance to persons wanting to start, grow or expand a business: www.bos.virginia.gov Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network provides guide to small scale producers: www.nichemeatprocessing.org/get-started

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