

FAQS ON GETTING BEEF FROM FARM TO MARKET

Where do meat inspection requirements come from? The requirements for meat inspection come from the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Mississippi Meat Inspection Act (MMIA) and the regulations adopted thereto.

What are the requirements for selling meat products in Mississippi? All beef, pork, sheep, goat, horse and other equine products sold to consumers must be from animals that have been slaughtered, processed and accurately labeled in an approved facility and have passed ante mortem and post mortem inspections.

What is an “approved facility?” An approved facility is a slaughtering facility that is licensed and inspected by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce’s (MDAC) Meat Inspection Division or has a grant of inspection from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and meets the applicable requirements set forth in the FMIA, which have been adopted by the Department.

Are there any approved facilities for beef inspection in Mississippi? Yes, one USDA facility and one MDAC inspected facility. Beef is slaughtered and processed under USDA inspection at Kased Brothers in Summit. Beef processed here may move in interstate commerce, i.e. sold across state lines. The contact number for Kased Brothers is 601-684-0319. Attala Frozen Foods in Kosciusko is a MDAC inspected facility. Beef processed here may only be sold within borders of Mississippi. The contact information is 662-289-2561.

Are there any approved facilities in surrounding states where I can have beef processed and bring it back to Mississippi. Yes. HOPCO in Headland, Alabama slaughters and processes beef under USDA inspection. Hopco’s contact number is 334-693-9299. Cox Butcher Shop in Florence, Alabama slaughters and processes beef under USDA inspection. Cox’s contact number is 256-766-2051. McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana slaughter and process beef into retail cuts of meat under USDA inspection but they do not produce non-intact products (ground beef or tenderized steak). McNeese State University’s contact number is 337-588-5008.

What is an antemortem inspection? This is an examination and inspection of the animal by a federal or state inspector before it enters the slaughtering facility. The purpose is to separate an animal that shows symptoms of disease from animals that are healthy.

What is a postmortem inspection? This is an examination and inspection of the carcass of the animal by a government inspector done for the purpose of detecting disease and/or adulteration.

Will my animal undergo any type of testing at the slaughter plant?

Possibly. Any animal presented for slaughter at an approved facility is subject to all testing (microbiological, residue) the same as any other carcass. The fact that it is farmer owned has no bearing on the inspection process if the farmer plans for the product to enter commerce.

What happens when an animal passes inspection? The product is stamped or labeled "Inspected" with the appropriate government agency's mark of inspection and can enter into interstate commerce if it has the USDA mark and intrastate commerce if it has the MDAC mark.

Can I sell my "Inspected" product at wholesale? Yes. Your product is legal for sale anywhere in Mississippi once inspected. You may wholesale the product, i.e. sell it to a retail outlet or restaurant for resale.

Can I sell my product at retail? Yes. The product can be sold by you at retail but you must obtain a retail food license from the department and your establishment must be inspected and meet sanitation requirements.

Can I sell my product at a farmers market? Yes, but because almost all of the farmers markets in Mississippi are outdoors markets, you must obtain a mobile retail food establishment license from the department and you must have a refrigerated mobile vehicle that the department approves before using.

Can I put a cooler in the back of my truck and drive up to the farmers market? No. In order to ensure food safety, cold foods must stay at or below 41°F at all times and frozen foods must remain entirely in a frozen state at all times. Chest coolers and household devices do not guarantee the same level of safety as commercially approved modes of refrigeration. With chest coolers, cold ambient temperature is guaranteed for only a short time, and with household coolers/freezers/refrigerators, cold temperature cannot be maintained outside in summer heat in a household styled cooler that is not intended to be opened and closed continuously throughout the day, as would happen at a market.

Pictures of approved trucks and trailers:





Why can't I use a refrigerator or freezer in the back of my truck or on a trailer?

Before MDAC adopted regulations requiring commercially approved refrigerated trucks or trailers, it allowed the use of inverters to power household coolers. Inspectors often found that the inverters would not be strong enough to power the refrigerators or freezers. Although the use of inverters and household coolers allowed more people to sell meat, the lack of investment and food safety experience on the part of many vendors led to many sanitation and food safety violations. Therefore, the Department had to adopt regulations to maintain an acceptable level of food safety.

Can I use a rented refrigerated trailer or vehicle? The Department has approved rented refrigerated trailers or vehicles as long as they are presented to the Department for approval prior to use.

Who should I contact to approve my refrigerated vehicle? Once a truck or trailer is selected, the vendor should contact the Consumer Protection office at 601-359-1148 to schedule an inspection of the truck. The inspectors will check the temperature and any products inside the truck. (If the vendor has not filled out a Mobile Vehicle Application, one will be given to him onsite. The cost is \$10/year.) The inspector will also make sure that the vendor has the proper labeling on the truck. Even if the truck or trailer is a rental, the name, address, and telephone number of the vendor should be conspicuously posted.

Is there any requirement for the method of sale of my inspected and packaged meat? Yes. Most meat has to be sold by net weight. Only certain and particular types of meat do not have to be sold by weight, such as offal (e.g., brains, feet, heads, and hearts) and meat that has been processed so much that it is no

longer considered meat (e.g., hamburgers, pastrami, sausages, chicken nuggets, and bologna). All other meat must be weighed on a scale that is approved for commercial use and labeled with a net weight declaration on the package. "Net weight" means that the packaging, or tare weight, cannot be counted toward the weight and price of the product.

What is a "scale that is approved for commercial use?" All scales used for commerce in Mississippi must be approved by the National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) within the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The following link can guide vendors when making a scale purchase:

https://www.ncwm.net/ntep/cert_search

For additional information, please see the attached document, "Buying Commercial Scales on the Internet."

Are there any other labeling requirements for beef products? Yes. The identity of the product and the processor's name and address. Beef products must be labeled with safe handling instructions as follows:

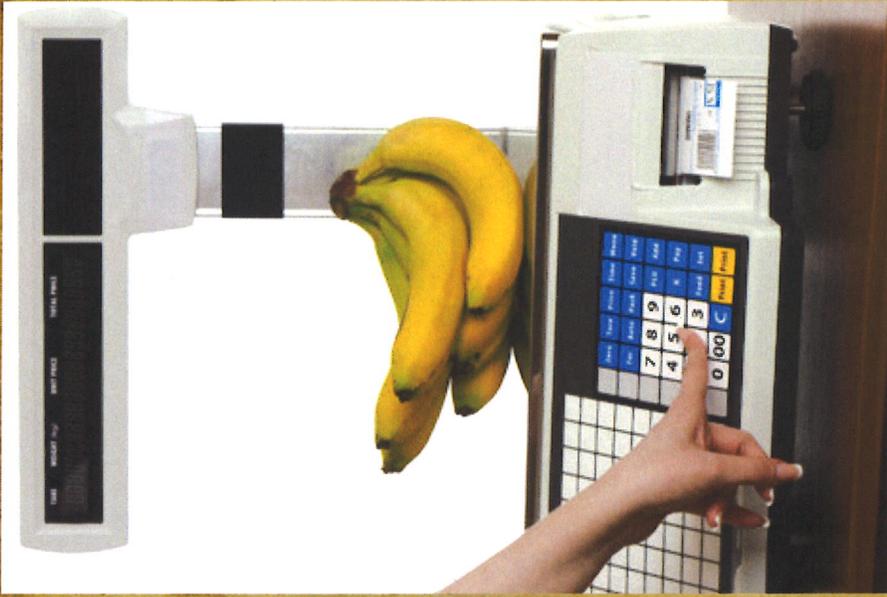
SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

Some food products may contain bacteria that could cause illness if the product is mishandled or cooked improperly. For your protection, follow these safe handling instructions

- Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave.
- Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and hands after touching raw meat or poultry.
- Cook thoroughly.
- Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.



BUYING COMMERCIAL SCALES ON THE INTERNET



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The internet brings many options to our buying decisions. While there is much to be said for supporting local businesses with known reputations and service after sale, more and more consumers are turning to the internet for convenience and often lower prices.

This can be a risky proposition when buying a scale that will affect your profits and be subject to regulatory requirements. This guide is designed to help you identify red flags and avoid some of the pitfalls if considering an internet purchase of a commercial scale. These things are important in any purchase of a scale, but may require additional effort on your part if you use an internet vendor.

Be aware of Regulations.

Most states require NTEP Certification for new scales that will be used in buying or selling. The NTEP Certificate is issued by the National Type Evaluation Program and it provides confidence that the model meets regulatory standards for design and performance and most likely can be approved for use in a commercial application. When shopping online, you will see the NTEP name, logo and often the phrase "Legal for Trade", but unfortunately things aren't always as they seem.

The NTEP name and logo are trademarked, but less reputable vendors have been identified using it without license and using it in misleading or deceptive ways. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to protect yourself in your purchase decision.

Do you know who you are buying from?

Look on the website for business name, a physical address, phone number and email address. A business that values its reputation and wants return business will

eagerly provide its identity and contact information. Consider the reasons why a business might not be so transparent as you read through our tips.

Does the ad claim that the scale is NTEP certified, either through a statement or by placement of the NTEP Logo in the advertisement?



If you don't see it, don't buy it. Inquire first with the vendor about NTEP Certification. Even if the ad says it is NTEP certified, you need to verify it.

Does the ad identify the manufacturer, model and NTEP Certificate Number?

Most ads will include the manufacturer's name, the model designation, and sometimes the NTEP Certificate number. It is important to understand what you are seeing.

Many scales come as a single instrument similar to what you see on the deli counter of your local grocery store. Other scales are advertised and sold as individual components which make up a complete scale. In this case, each of the components must have their own certificate number. This is where deception can occur. The NTEP logo placed in an ad would imply that the system is certified when, in reality, one or more components might not be.

If the vendor is willing to disclose information on the separate components of the system, it's a very good sign and gives you a tool for additional verification.

Look up the NTEP Certificate of Conformance.

A searchable database is available on the website of the National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM): the standards organization that administers NTEP. See http://www.ncwm.net/ntep/cert_search.

There, you can find and download the actual certificates. Many certificates even have pictures for comparison to what you see in the advertisement. The certificate will describe whether it applies to a component such as an indicator, a platform, the load cells, or if it applies to a complete scale.

If you want some help, NCWM is just a phone call away or you can contact your state regulatory authority. A directory is available at on the NCWM website at <http://www.ncwm.net/resource/state-directors>.

What does the phrase "Legal for Trade" mean?

In some ads you may see the phrase "Legal for Trade". This phrase is often misused even by many reputable dealers. Let's be clear on this one. No scale is legal for trade until the regulatory authority says it's legal for trade. NTEP Certification provides some assurance that it is manufactured to meet national standards, but there are other factors that the inspector must consider before approving the device for use in your business such as suitability, proper installation, and accuracy. Is the internet vendor helpful to you in understanding these other factors before selling you a "legal for trade" scale?

When comparing prices, consider the big picture.

Let's be honest; NTEP Certification is merely the bare-bones minimum standard. Anything less is not considered legal for commerce in most states. Maybe bare-bones is all you need, but don't assume all things NTEP are created equal. Some are higher quality than others and many have value added features that might help your business.

Does the internet vendor explain these differences for you? Also consider whether the vendor has an authorized local dealer who knows the legal requirements, can properly install and calibrate the scale and will be there for you after the sale.

If in doubt, contact your regulatory authority before you buy at www.ncwm.net/resource/state-directors.

They won't tell you what to buy, but they can tell you what not to buy. Many of them also maintain lists of licensed sales and service vendors who have demonstrated understanding of the requirements necessary for a scale to be "legal for trade".

It's an important purchase. Buy wisely. And also consider supporting that local business.