

## **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, and goat 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, there are four USDA facilities and one MDAC inspected facility. Beef processed at USDA facilities may move in interstate commerce, i.e. sold across state lines. The contact number for the four USDA facilities are Home Place Pastures in Como (662-292-5808), Homestead Farm & Packing in Lucedale (601-508-4707), Kased Brothers in Summit (601-684-0319) and MSU Red Meat Lab in Starkville (662-325-2932). 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.

**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. 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. All products shall be labeled as required under the rules and regulations of the appropriate inspection program.

**Am I required to use a specific type of vehicle or trailer when selling my product at a farmers market?** No. Effective February 16, 2019, mobile vendors who transport and sell potentially hazardous foods are no longer required to use continuous mechanical refrigeration or cold plate systems. However, in order to ensure food safety, appropriate temperatures must always be maintained, and upon request, demonstrated to the Department of Agriculture and Commerce. 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.

**Who should I contact to obtain a mobile retail food establishment license?** The vendor should contact the Consumer Protection Division at 601-359-1148 to obtain a mobile retail food establishment license. (If the vendor has not filled out a Mobile Vehicle Application, one will be given to him onsite. The cost is \$10/year.)

**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 links can guide vendors when making a scale purchase:

<http://www.ncwm.net/resource/consumer-information>

(Then click on “Buying Commercial Scales on the Internet.”)

[https://www.ncwm.net/ntep/cert\\_search](https://www.ncwm.net/ntep/cert_search)

**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.