

Under 1K Poultry Exempt Requirements & Recommendations

The intent of the Under 1K poultry exemption is to provide a means for a small poultry producer to process whole birds on their farm for local distribution. It is the goal of Quality Assurance and Regulations (QAR) to provide support and education to these small poultry producers that will encourage good sanitary practices on the farm and a supply of wholesome, locally grown whole birds to the consumer.

This document is composed of two sections. **Section 1** is a list of requirements which must be met by all Under 1K poultry exempt operators to legally operate in Maine. **Section 2** is composed of QAR's recommended best practices for safe poultry slaughtering and processing operations. QAR encourages all Under 1K poultry exempt operators to incorporate as many recommendations in **Section 2** as possible into their operations in order to produce a safe and healthy product for consumers.

Section 1: Requirements for Under 1K Poultry Exempt Operators

General Requirements:

Poultry must be raised, slaughtered and processed on property legally owned or leased by the Under 1K operator.

Under 1K operators must register with MMPI/QA&R annually.

Under 1K operators must allow inspection on the premises for periodic reviews and education.

Under 1K operators must maintain records of poultry raised and processed.

Under 1K operators must process less than 1000 poultry in one calendar year.

Under 1K operators must assign a lot number to all birds sold and maintain a record of signed lot numbers and the poultry carcasses' point of sale.

Poultry must be healthy upon slaughter. The slaughter and processing of dead, dying, or diseased poultry is prohibited.

Poultry must be processed under sanitary conditions.

Poultry carcasses must remain whole, not cut up into parts, sausage or other products.

Poultry organs, including the heart, giblets and livers cannot be sold.

Poultry must be packaged and labelled in accordance with statute. (see labelling section below)

Poultry must be packaged and labelled before sold.

Poultry must be held frozen or under refrigerated conditions until sold.

License and Registration Requirements:

DACF licensure is not required to raise, slaughter or sell poultry using the Under 1K Poultry exemption. Free annual registration with DACF is required. CSAs, municipal or private farmers' markets, local stores and/or restaurants may choose to require Under 1K poultry operators to maintain DACF licensure, at their discretion.



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Under 1K Poultry products may only be distributed as follows:

Direct sales to customers from the Under 1K operator's farm.

Direct sales to customers with delivery to the customer's home by the Under 1K operator.

Direct sales to customers at farmers' markets.

Wholesaling to locally owned stores and restaurants.

Wholesaling to a Community Supported Agriculture organization (CSA) whose members have a direct marketing relationship with the Under 1K operator.

No sales outside of the state of Maine and no wholesaling of products to large/chain stores and restaurants.

Under 1K poultry exempt labels must bear the following information:

1. The farm's name
2. The Under 1K producer's name
3. The physical address of the farm, including the zip code
4. The following disclosure statement: *"Exempt under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 2517-C NOT INSPECTED"*
5. Written safe handling and cooking instructions, using the following wording:
"SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS: Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave. Keep raw poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces, including cutting boards, utensils, and hands after touching raw poultry. Cook thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit maintained for at least 15 seconds. Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard."
6. The Under 1K poultry exempt operator's registration number, which will be issued to the Under 1K poultry exempt operator by QAR after registration.
7. A lot number, which is assigned to all birds sold. The Under 1K operator must maintain a record of signed lot numbers and point of sale for all poultry.

Section 2: Recommended Best Practices for Safe Poultry Products

The following guidance information is provided as a resource for Under 1K poultry exempt operators as they design their facilities and their manufacturing processes to ensure production of safe and healthy poultry products. Please contact QAR at (207) 287-3841 with further questions or for assistance in designing best practices for your facility.

Poultry Health and Humane Handling:

Birds should be made to move around in pens and visually examined for health and condition before slaughter. Birds put in crates for slaughter should be held in areas that provide adequate ventilation and protection on days with extreme temperatures. Establishments should follow Good Commercial Practices whenever possible to ensure the humane treatment of birds. See **Appendix A** for an example of a Good Commercial Practices program.

Establishment grounds and facilities:

- Areas where poultry is slaughtered should be kept clean and well maintained to prevent insanitary conditions and contamination of products. This may include mowing the grass regularly, removing large debris or junk items that could attract and harbor pests, and locating slaughter and processing operations away from holding pens soiled with feces.
- Any pest control chemicals used in or around poultry slaughter and processing areas should be safe for use in a food processing environment and handled carefully to prevent contamination of food products and creation of insanitary conditions.
- Sufficient lighting should be provided in areas where poultry carcasses are processed and where equipment is cleaned and sanitized to ensure the food products and equipment can be visually inspected for sanitary conditions.
- Ventilation should be adequate to control odors, vapors, and condensation to the extent necessary to prevent product adulteration.
- A supply of running water is necessary during operations to maintain sanitary conditions. If using a private well, an annual water test should be performed to test for coliforms, E. coli and nitrites before starting operations for the year. Warm or hot water is more effective than cold water to clean equipment and facilities.

Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration (removal of internal organs):

Operations planning on bleeding, defeathering and eviscerating birds **outdoors** should use all means necessary to prevent pest attraction and bacterial contamination. Specifically consider:

- Condition of the soil. Does the area have adequate drainage? Clay soil will not allow moisture to drain quickly, and may result in standing water in the area, which will attract pests as well as create an environment for bacteria and mold growth.
- Location. Consideration should be given to crops that are grown nearby. Runoff from the slaughter area to gardens may result in bacterial contamination of the produce.
- Protection from flying pests. Outdoor processing areas can be protected from flying pests using temporary or permanent physical walls, screened tents, or strong fans to prevent flies from being able to land on the carcasses.
- Blood, feathers and offal (guts), including the head and feet should be disposed of in a manner that prevents contamination of the carcasses and does not attract pests.

Feathers, blood and feces are the largest contributors to bacterial contamination of products and the environment. Bleeding and defeathering of carcasses should be conducted separately from evisceration. Evisceration should be performed indoors if at all possible. When eviscerating the bird, care should be taken to prevent fecal matter and intestinal contents (ingesta) from coming in contact with carcasses, work surfaces and utensils. Consideration should be given to how you will remove fecal matter or ingesta from carcasses, surfaces and utensils in case of a gut puncture **before** starting operations. Water or diluted bleach solutions can be used to wash off poultry carcasses, work surfaces and utensils can be cleaned with water and sanitizing solutions, and

handwashing stations are recommended for personnel cleanup after gut punctures. Birds that have not yet received their final wash and inspection should not be placed together in chilling tanks, as contaminants from a single bird may be spread to the other birds in a water tank. Care should be taken to move each bird to the final rinse and inspection area in a way that prevents cross-contamination between birds.

Final rinse and inspection:

Final rinsing and inspection of the bird should be conducted indoors, where the operation can be protected from flies, birds and environmental contaminants. Each bird should be carefully inspected for any contaminants such as feathers, feces, ingesta and blood. Each bird should be rinsed thoroughly before ice water or air chilling. The area for final inspection and rinsing should have adequate lighting and be free of contamination from the environment, pests, mold and bacteria, as well as foreign materials such as metal, glass, plastic and wood.

Chilling:

Chilling the birds quickly to 40°F or below will help reduce growth of Salmonella, E. coli and other pathogens that will sicken consumers. The longer the internal temperature of the bird remains above 40°F, the greater the opportunity for these pathogenic bacteria to grow. Cold tap water alone will not chill poultry carcasses to 40°F or below. Consideration should be given to how chilling of the carcasses will be accomplished, whether by packing in ice, ice slurry, freezer chilling etc. Placing poultry carcasses in a residential refrigerator will not result in rapid chilling, as hot poultry carcasses chilled in residential refrigerators may take more than 24 hours to reach temperatures below 40°F. The goal should be to chill birds to less than 40°F within 4-8 hours of slaughter. A freezer holding a small number of birds with air space between carcasses will chill the carcasses much faster than a freezer stuffed with many birds touching one another. During initial operations we recommend inserting a meat thermometer into your largest carcass to monitor the amount of time it takes for that carcass to reach less than 40°F, and to give consideration as to how you could alter and speed up your chilling process if you find that carcasses are not being chilled to less than 40°F in 4 to 8 hours.

Utensils and work surfaces:

All utensils and work surfaces should be smooth and easily cleanable. Any utensils or surfaces with visible rust should be treated for rust removal or discarded. Wood surfaces and utensils should be avoided as wood is porous and susceptible to absorbing water and fostering bacterial growth even when painted or treated with polyurethane. Plastic pails, tubs and surfaces should be inspected for signs of wear; cracks, chipping, fraying and general roughness provide harborage sites for pathogenic bacteria and dirt. Damaged utensils and surfaces cannot be adequately cleaned and sanitized, resulting in places for bacteria to grow and to potentially contaminate the carcasses during processing. Grouted tile work surfaces should be avoided due to the difficulty of completely cleaning grout. It is recommended that hoses used for rinsing birds and filling tanks should be food grade or drinking water quality (Recreational Vehicle approved) to prevent chemical contamination of carcasses.

Cleaning and sanitizing:

All food-contact and non-food-contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions.

- A general dish detergent can be used for cleaning surfaces and utensils. Hot water (110°F or higher) is necessary to remove fats and proteins.
- Hot water is necessary to adequately rinse away detergents and food soils. Sanitizing work surfaces and utensils can be accomplished using one capful of Germicidal Bleach (not laundry bleach) in one gallon of water. Germicidal bleach that is specific for food contact surfaces is readily available at Home Depot, Lowes, Staples, some local hardware stores and restaurant supply stores. When using “concentrated” germicidal bleach, the dilution recipe is 1 capful of bleach in two gallons of water.
- Contact time of at least one minute is needed for a germicidal bleach sanitizing solution to kill bacteria on a clean surface.
- Testing bleach concentration using chlorine testing strips prior to operations and periodically during operations is highly encouraged since organic debris from the poultry inactivates the bleach. Try to maintain your solution at 200 ppm or greater of chlorine.
- Sanitization can also be accomplished without chemicals by immersion for at least 30 seconds in clean, hot water at a temperature of at least 180°F.

Labeling:

After chilling the birds to 40°F or below, the birds should be removed from the chilling medium and allowed to drain. Bags being used to package the birds should be labeled prior to stuffing as it is often difficult to label the bag once the bird has been placed inside due to the shape and/or moisture. The label must have all information required from Section 1.

Storage:

Birds should be 40°F or below before selling to customers and maintained at or below 40°F during storage, distribution and/or during mobile vending markets. The whole birds should be sold or frozen within 7 days of slaughter and processing.

Notes:

When planning where poultry will be slaughtered and processed, consideration should be given to the future. If you believe there is a possibility you may grow your operation to more than 1000 birds, or you will want to be able to cut up and/or further process your poultry in the future, decisions regarding materials, design and structure(s) should be made with the requirements of the QAR Commercial Kitchen License in mind.

Poultry producers who slaughter and process up to 20K birds or cut up or make value added products like pot pies or sausage under the Grower-Producer or Small Enterprise poultry

exemptions are required to conduct all slaughter and processing operations inside a QAR licensed facility designed to handle a 'wet process', including but not limited to: smooth, easily cleanable floors pitched to floor drainage; walls, ceiling, doors and windows designed to be impermeable to moisture; separate rooms for bleeding/defeathering, processing and value added products; required numbers and styles of ware and handwash sinks; and approved septic systems and water testing to prove water potability. Please contact QAR at (207) 287-3841 if you would like more information about the requirements for QAR licensure.

Appendix A: Good Commercial Practices for Humane Handling of Poultry

Adapted from California Department of Food and Agriculture

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/mpes/pdfs/GoodComercialPracticesHumaneHandlingPoultry.pdf>

1.0 HANDLING OF LIVE BIRDS

Abuse of any birds during catching, holding shackling, slaughtering is not permitted. Conditions that put broilers in immediate danger are referred to as acts of intentional and egregious animal abuse.

These include but are not limited to:

- Poking a stick, prod, or other object into a sensitive part of the bird such as the eye, nostril, mouth, ear, or cloaca.
- Cutting off limbs, wings, skinning, or cutting into any bird that shows any sign of sensibility (consciousness), except for religiously approved practices (i.e. Kosher or Halal slaughter).
- Malicious use of equipment that results in breaking a bone, suffocation, or death of bird(s).
- Dragging, hitting, kicking, or throwing a bird with the intention of causing injury.
- Striking a bird(s) with any type of object with the intention of causing injury.

1.0.1 All poultry operations should have a written training program for bird catching, holding, handling, shackling, slaughtering and euthanasia.

1.0.2 Birds in coops must be gently removed.

1.0.3 Broilers must be caught by their LEGS as this is standard catching procedure.

1.0.4 Birds must not be caught or carried by one leg.

1.0.5 Birds must never be lifted, carried, or drug by the wing or neck and never be thrown.

1.0.6 Birds in holding crates must be gently removed. Birds must never be removed / lifted by the wings

1.0.7 The Holding area should be covered and equipped with fans (and misters if necessary) or heaters to ensure proper cooling/warming of birds.

1.0.8 Holding cages should be appropriately sized and in good repair so that no birds can be injured or escape. Cage damage, including large holes, broken or missing doors, or broken (not bent) wires is cause to repair or discard the crate.

1.0.9 Holding cages should permit the birds to sit without being on top of one another (can rest in a single layer).

2.0 SLAUGHTER

2.0.1 Birds must be handled as little as possible up to the point of slaughter

2.0.2 Holding crates should be as close as possible to the cones or shackles to lessen the time of handling of the birds.

2.0.3 Birds must be slaughtered within a reasonable amount of time, normally within two hours of crating.

2.0.4 Inversion and suspension of birds must be minimized.

2.0.5 No bird should be inverted or suspended in such a manner as to cause it avoidable pain or suffering.

2.0.6 Birds must not be inverted and placed in cones or on shackles unless personnel mean to slaughter them immediately.

2.0.7 If birds are placed in cones, they must be the correct size for the type of bird.

2.0.8 Chickens and ducks must not be inverted for more than 60 seconds before being stunned or killed.

2.0.9 Turkeys and geese must not be inverted for more than 120 seconds before being stunned or killed.

2.0.10 Cutting, bleeding or dressing any sensible bird is not allowed.

3.1 SHACKLES

3.1.1 If shackles are used, they must be the correct size and width for the birds.

3.1.2 If shackles are used, birds must be hung by both legs.

3.1.3 The shackle must be designed and positioned in such a way that the bird suspended on it is clear of any obstruction – including when its wings are outstretched.

3.1.4 From the time of shackling to the time of stunning there should be no unnecessary noises that can cause unnecessary disturbance to the birds.

3.1.5 Shackles must be cleaned and maintained according to manufacturer's specification. Note: Rust on shackles may prevent effective electric stunning.

4.0 STUNNING

4.0.1 Stunning must render birds immediately insensible to pain on the first attempt.

4.0.2 All birds must be rendered insensible to pain (stunned) prior to being cut.

4.0.3 Stunning must ensure birds remain insensible to pain until the bird dies due to slaughter or blood loss.

4.0.4 If any sign of sensibility is observed at any time after stunning, the bird must be re-stunned immediately.

4.0.5 Equipment used to shackle, stun, bleed and kill a bird must be kept and maintained in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

4.0.6 Equipment used to shackle, stun, bleed and kill a bird must only be used within the design parameters described by the manufacturer.

4.0.7 For all stunning equipment there should be reserve equipment for use in case of emergency or breakdown; or there must be a protocol to stop slaughtering and remove any live birds from shackles or cones.

4.0.8 Staff that carry out stunning and bleeding must be trained to use the available equipment.

5.0 STAFF AND TRAINING

5.0.1 There should be a named individual responsible for bird welfare within the facility that has the authority to act should any welfare issues arise.

5.0.2 Training in humane methods of poultry handling should be made available to all staff working with live birds.

5.0.3 Staff should be trained to recognize signs of effective and ineffective stunning and signs of recovery of consciousness.

5.0.4 There should be clearly written standard operating procedures for every step of the operation and staff responsible for animal handling, stunning and slaughter are to be familiar with these procedures.