

Fewer than 1000 Bird Exemption

The intent of the fewer than 1000 bird exemption is to provide a means for a small grower to process whole birds on the farm for local distribution. It is the goal of Quality Assurance and Regulations to provide support and education to these small growers that will encourage good sanitary practices on the farm and a supply of wholesome, locally grown whole birds to the consumer.

Requirements:

- Birds must be grown and processed on the farm
- Grower must register with MMPI/QA&R
- Grower must allow inspection on the premises for periodic reviews and education
- Grower must maintain records of birds raised and processed; fewer than 1000
- Birds must be processed under sanitary condition
- Birds must remain whole, not cut up into parts**
- Birds must be packaged and adequately labeled
- Birds must be held frozen or under refrigerated condition until sold

Licenses:

- No license is required to sell whole birds under the fewer than 1000 bird exemption.
- There is no fee associated with the registration.

Distribution:

1. Direct sale to customers from the farm.
 2. Direct sale to local restaurants, inns and institutions
 3. Direct sale to customers at farmers' markets
 4. Indirect sale to small local food stores
- ***All sales are restricted to **whole** birds sold only to local market. No sales outside the state of Maine. No sales to large and/or chain stores/restaurants.

General Guidance

Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Operations planning on bleeding, defeathering and eviscerating birds outside should give consideration to the prevention of conditions that will result in pest attraction and bacterial growth:

- Condition of the soil. Does the area have adequate drainage? Soil heavy with clay will not allow moisture to drain quickly and may result in standing water. This will attract pests as well as create an area for bacterial growth.
- Location. Consideration should be given to foods that are grown nearby. Runoff from the slaughter area to produce grown close by may result in bacterial contamination of the produce.
- Disposal of blood, feathers and offal (guts).

Feathers, blood and fecal are the largest contributors to bacterial contamination. Bleeding and defeathering should be conducted separate from evisceration. When eviscerating the bird care should be taken to prevent fecal matter from coming in contact with the bird, work surface and utensils. Consideration should be given to what will be in place to remove fecal matter from the bird (water), work surfaces and utensils (water and sanitizing solution) as well as hands (mobile handwash station). Birds that have not yet received the final wash and inspection should not be placed together in a wash tank as contaminants from one bird may be spread to the other birds. Care should be taken to move each bird to the final rinsing and inspection area in a way to prevent cross-contamination from one bird to another.

Final rinse and inspection:

Final rinsing and inspection of the bird should be conducted inside where the operation can be protected from flies, birds and environmental contaminants. Each bird should be carefully inspected for any contaminants such as feathers, fecal and blood. Each bird should be rinsed thoroughly before 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 40F or below will help reduce bacteria growth. The longer the temperature of the bird remains above 40F the greater the chance for bacteria to grow. Cold water alone will not chill the birds to 40F or below. Consideration should be given to how chilling will be accomplished; ice, ice slurry, freezer etc. It is highly unlikely that simply placing the birds in a refrigerator will result in rapid chilling. This manner of chilling birds may take in excess of 24 hours. The goal should be to chill birds within 4-8 hours depending on size.

Utensils and work surfaces:

All utensils and work surfaces should be smooth and easily cleanable. Any utensils or surfaces with rust should be avoided. Wood should be avoided as over time it is susceptible to moisture 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. Damaged utensils and surfaces cannot be adequately cleaned and sanitized resulting in places for bacteria to grow and potentially contaminate the bird during processing. Grouted tile work surfaces should be avoided as grout is not a cleanable surface. Hoses used for rinsing birds and filling tanks should be food grade to prevent chemical contamination.

Cleaning and sanitizing:

A general dish detergent can be used for cleaning surfaces and utensils. Hot water (110F) is necessary to remove fats and proteins. Hot water is necessary to adequately rinse away the detergent and food soils. Sanitizing work surfaces and utensils can be accomplished using one cap of Germicidal Bleach (not

laundry bleach) in one gallon of water. When using germicidal bleach that is concentrated, the dilution is 1 cap of bleach in two gallons of water. One-minute contact time is needed for the sanitizing solution to kill any bacteria on a clean surface. Germicidal bleach is readily available at Home Depot, Lowes, Staples, some local hardware stores and restaurant supply stores.

Labeling:

After chilling the birds to 40F 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 use as it is often difficult to label a bag once the bird has been placed inside because of shape and/or moisture. The label must have the following information:

1. The name and address of the farm/poultry producer including street address and zip code.
2. The statement – ***Exempt under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 2517-C NOT INSPECTED.***
3. The following safe handling instructions: ***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 165F maintained for at least 15 seconds. Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.***
4. Registration number (This number will be generated once the registration is received and processed).

Each bird must be packaged and labeled prior to selling.

Storage:

Birds must be 40F or below before selling to customers and maintained at or below 40F during storage, distribution and/or during mobile vending markets.

Note:

When planning where poultry will be slaughtered and processed, consideration should be given to future plans. If there is a possibility of growing the operation to more than 1000 birds, decisions regarding materials, design and structure(s) should be made with the potential for meeting commercial food processing requirements in the future. Commercial processors (Grower/Producer - fewer than 20,000 birds) are required to conduct all slaughter and processing operations inside a facility designed to handle a 'wet process'; smooth, easily cleanable floors pitched to drain into a floor drain. Walls, ceiling, doors and windows designed to be impermeable to moisture. Separate rooms for bleeding/defeathering, processing and value added products (if desired). Septic must be approved and water tested to prove potability.

Regardless of the number of birds being grown and processed, any poultry operation wishing to cut up birds must do so under a commercial food processing license.