TL 210

On Farm Processing – Poultry Slaughter and Dressing

ORGANIC FARMERS & GROWERS
GB-ORG-02

Organic requirements are in addition to other statutory requirements
Statutory information is for guidance only and is correct at time of going to print

It is important to be aware of both the legal and organic requirements before setting up a poultry slaughter/dressing operation, but with good planning, it can be done fairly cheaply.

Part I of this leaflet explains the requirements for very small operations. Part II gives details of the requirements for larger operations, where stricter regulations apply. It is as well to read this section and apply as much of it as possible, even to a small operation. From Part III onwards, the information applies to all food preparation businesses.

Legal Requirements: Anyone preparing, processing or selling food for human consumption must make sure the food is safe. To do this, the food processing area must comply with statutory legislation in terms of structure, equipment and cleanliness and the staff must have appropriate workwear and training. For organic products, it is also necessary to comply with the organic regulations.

Licensing: The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995, as amended, state that it is an absolute offence to cause or permit an animal avoidable excitement, pain or suffering. There are specific rules on handling, stunning, slaughter or killing of birds and anyone carrying out any of these tasks must have the knowledge and skill to do the job humanely and efficiently.

These regulations require the slaughter person to be licensed by Defra but there are exemptions. Licensing is not required where the killing is done by neck dislocation or decapitation on the farm where the bird was reared. However if electrical stunning is involved, the slaughter person must be licensed.

Part I - Requirements for small operations where home-produced birds are killed for sale at the farm-gate or farmers' market only.

Registration: Operators must register with the Environmental Health Department of their local Council. An Environmental Health Officer (EHO) will then visit and advise on licensing and on structural and hygiene requirements. He/she has to ensure food safety (ie the operation must be carried out in an hygienic manner), so will take a risk-based view of the premises and the slaughter/dressing operation.

Premises: Generally this will be a dedicated site with 3 separate areas for slaughter, hanging and dressing. The walls should be non-porous (ie can be easily cleaned). Floors should be well-draining and ceilings finished to avoid flaking and dirt lodgement. Racks are needed for hanging the birds. Cutting tables and utensils should generally be stainless steel, there must be adequate hot water for effective cleaning and there should be hand-washing facilities in the room.

Process: After slaughter, the birds are allowed to bleed for a short time whilst hanging from the feet, then dry or wet plucked. They should then be hung in a chilled room/fridge at a temperature no higher than 4˚C. Birds are generally hung for 2-4 days then dressed (eviscerated and feet and neck removed), packed and labelled. They may also be cut into joints at this stage. Temperature of the meat must be kept below 4˚C during dressing and subsequent storage.

Labelling: Labels must name the type of bird and cut (if appropriate) eg chicken breast fillets, name/address of the seller, recommended storage conditions, best before date and weight

Traceability: Each bird or portion must be labelled so that it is traceable back to a flock and day of kill. (This may be possible using the best before date, if not, another code should be used.)

Part II – Requirements for larger operations

If live birds are bought-in, **or** the processed birds are sold by a third party, **or** if more than 10,000 birds are killed each year, then the premises need to be approved by the Food Standards Agency and stricter regulations apply.

Officers of the Meat Hygiene Inspection Service (MHIS), on behalf of the Agency, enforce the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1995 and the Poultry Meat, Farmed Game Bird Meat and Rabbit Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1995 at the premises.

The rules vary for full and low throughput plants. The information given here is for low throughput cutting plants, which are defined as processing no more than 3 tonnes of white meat per week for human consumption.

Intake
The premises must have a clearly defined boundary. If unwrapped poultry meats are brought in, they must be protected from the elements during unloading and kept in a chiller which can keep the temperature at +4'C or less. (Offal must be kept at +3°C or less). There should be separate chillers for wrapped and unwrapped meats, or, if a large chiller is sub-divided, physical separation. Unwrapped meats should be suspended, or kept on racks of non-corrodible construction, and must not touch walls, floors or pillars. Wrapped meats must be stored off the floor on a pallet, rack or shelf.

Inspection Point

All meat must be inspected for defects and contamination before cutting. The inspection point must have hot and cold running water, a hand tool steriliser and specified light levels.

Cutting Room
Refrigeration of the room itself is not required if the temperature of the white meat does not exceed +4'C (Offal temp +3°C) during cutting and packing. Hand-wash facilities (not hand-operated) and a hand tool steriliser are required, though in small premises, the facilities at inspection may suffice. Equipment must be durable and corrosion resistant (eg stainless steel).

Storage
Requirements are the same as for the reception chiller. (Same chiller may be used if only wrapped meat is handled)

Standard of surface finishes
In rooms where exposed meat is stored / handled, floor surfaces must be durable, non-slip, well-maintained and well drained. Wall surfaces must be smooth, durable, easily cleaned and light coloured. Ceilings must be finished to avoid mould, dirt lodgement, flaking and be kept clean. There should be ventilation to external air (except in temperature-controlled rooms such as chillers)

Ancillary Facilities
Toilets must not communicate directly with storage / processing rooms and require hand wash sink, soap and paper towels. The MHIS Officer must have access to a desk, chair and lockable filing cabinet. Packaging must be stored in a clean, dry vermin-proof room (or separate cupboard).

Waste
All meat waste must be collected in lidded containers. Meat unfit for human consumption must be in dedicated, marked, lockable containers. **Waste must be collected frequently so as not to attract pests or create smells.**

Part III – Requirements for all food processing businesses

Pest Control
Preventive pest control should be in place to prevent contamination by pest-borne bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungal spores, rodent hairs and droppings, bird droppings and dead insects. Any of these can spread disease and lead to prosecutions and large fines which tend not to be good adverts for a food business.

Small local Pest Control Contractors are often excellent but it's recommended to check that they are members of the British Pest Control Association (www.BPCA.org.uk). The local Environmental Health Officer may offer advice or treatment or it's possible to go on a BPCA-approved training course and do it yourself. Only wax

baits should be used – no dusts or sprays should be used in organic food production / storage areas.

Cleaning
There are 2 levels of cleanliness – visually clean and microbiologically clean. Visual cleanliness is important for appearance, safety (greasy floors can cause accidents) and efficiency (eg to reduce scale on heating coils).

Microbiological cleanliness (disinfection) is necessary for product contact surfaces – these include tables, machines, chopping boards, utensils and hands.

Surfaces must be properly cleaned before disinfection. There is no point using a disinfectant (also called a sanitiser) on a dirty surface, because the dirt will use up the disinfectant power.

It's necessary to use a detergent and a sanitiser, or possibly a combined detergent/sanitiser. There are many different types of these available, each type being suitable for a different situation, water-hardness etc and each has pros and cons. It is best to discuss with two or three Cleaning Chemical Suppliers and compare their recommendations. See (Ref.2) for further information.

A typical cleaning schedule would be:- Dismantle equipment, pre-rinse, clean with detergent, rinse, disinfect, re-assemble (without re-contaminating product contact surfaces if possible, or disinfect again)

A final water rinse of product contact surfaces is required for organic production, to ensure no traces of cleaning chemical remain.

Staff
Staff need to be trained to understand hygiene requirements, their responsibility as food handlers and health and safety issues. The extent of hygiene training required depends on the sensitivity of the products and the amount of supervision there will be, so it is a good idea to discuss this with the EHO or MHS.

Staff carrying out high risk food production (eg cooked meats) need more training than those working in low risk (eg raw products).

- The Food Safety Regs state that "Every person working in a food handling area shall maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and shall wear suitable, clean and where appropriate, protective clothing" It goes on to state "Adequate facilities for personnel must be provided where necessary".
- The Health and Safety at Work Act requires the employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees.
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regs require training and protective equipment for staff handling cleaning chemicals, pesticides or irritant ingredients (eg flavours).

Staff should have hairnets (and possibly beard/moustache snoods), overalls that cover staff's own clothing, footwear and possibly rubber gloves. Butchery staff may require sleeve guards, aprons, metal-mesh gloves.

All work wear must be waterproof and washable or disposable. Workwear should be worn in the food processing and storage areas only, it should be removed when in the canteen, toilet, outside or in the office. There should be no smoking, eating, drinking in production areas

HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)
A Hazard Analysis of the operation needs to be drawn up. This involves assessing the potential hazards of the operation and putting in controls to make sure it is safe.

An example of a potential hazard is the temperature of the fridge where poultry meat is kept after dressing and packing, because higher temperatures will allow faster growth of bacteria.

1. Identify Critical Control Points	the temperature of the meat in the shop fridge
2. Establish critical limits	acceptable temp range 0-4°C
3. Set up procedures to monitor CCPs	check and record fridge temp at least twice daily
4. Take corrective action if necessary	fridge temp too high. Turn temp. down to correct level, or if fridge broken, remove all food products to another fridge and arrange for repair. (It may be necessary to dispose of the food.)
5. Document	record what has happened
6. Verify the system	check the fridge more frequently and carry out microbiological checks on the poultry meat.

ORGANIC FOOD PROCESSING REGULATIONS

For organic food processing, all statutory legislation must be complied with, plus

- Certified organic suppliers must be used ie livestock and abattoir used must be organically certified
- Processing premises must be organically certified
- Approved food industry detergents and disinfectants maybe used but they must be rinsed off all product contact surfaces before organic production starts
- No spraying/fogging of cleaning chemicals/pesticides where organic products/packaging may be affected
- Only organic or approved ingredients can be used and they must be kept segregated from conventional ingredients
- Labelling must comply with organic requirements

Costs and Grants

Building costs – the following are estimates from the Meat and Livestock Commission, however a very small operation can be set up for £2000-£4000 by converting the chiller from the back of a chilled wagon that is no longer road-worthy.

to convert and equip farm buildings – approx £100,000
to build on a new green-field site – approx £150,000

As a comparison, a rule of thumb in the food industry is that it costs approx. £1200 per sq.metre to install floor, cladded walls and ceiling, water, light, power and ventilation to a high quality level. Purpose built portacabins are also available, complete with everything except food processing equipment.

For total project cost under £70,000 - grant aid may be available, under Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES). For total project cost over £70,000 - grant aid may be available, for a Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) under the England Rural Development Programme. Advice, application forms etc available from DEFRA offices and website www.defra.gov.org

Other Costs: MHS Supervision - equipment and ancillary items (see Ref.3); utilities; staff salaries and training; ingredient, packaging and marketing costs.

References / Useful contacts

Ref.1 Application forms and guidance notes for licence for red and white meat cutting premises are available from the Food Standards Agency

England	0207 276 8000	N.Ireland	02890 417700
Scotland	01224 285100	Wales	02920 678999

or website www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/meatplantsprems/meatpremlicence

Ref.2 For information on hygiene in the workplace

Useful book: Hygiene for Management by Richard Sprenger Tel: 01302 850007

Ref.3 Equipment for meat cutting plants (freezers, cutting equipment, protective wear, sundries etc) Wrights of Liverpool Tel: 0151 270 2904

Further Information

For further information or an application pack, please contact the OF&G Processor Certification Department on:-

T: 01939 291800 / 0845 330 5122 ext 230 or 235
F: 01939 291250 / 0845 330 5123
E: processors@organicfarmers.org.uk
W: www.organicfarmers.org.uk