

**Rules of
Georgia Department of Agriculture
Chapter 40-10-1
Meat Inspection - Meat Processing**

If the proposed operation is to be a traditional meat department within a retail store and the products are sold directly to the consumer in that location, then the following regulations apply:

40-10-1-.04 Exemptions. Amended.

1) Exemptions:

1. The requirements of the Act and the regulations in this chapter for inspection of the preparation of products do not apply to operations of types traditionally and usually conducted at retail stores and restaurants, when conducted at any retail store or restaurant or similar retail-type establishment in Georgia for sale in normal retail quantities or service of such articles to consumers at such establishments.

2. For purposes of subparagraph 1. of this paragraph, operations of types traditionally and usually conducted at retail stores and restaurants are the following:

- i) Cutting up, slicing, and trimming carcasses, halves, quarters, or wholesale cuts into retail cuts such as steaks, chops, and roasts, and freezing such cuts;
- ii) Grinding and freezing products made from meat;
- iii) Curing, cooking, smoking, or other preparations of products, except slaughtering, rendering, or refining or livestock fat or the retort-processing of canned products;
- iv) Breaking bulk shipments of products;
- v) Wrapping or rewrapping products.

3. Any quantity or product purchased by a consumer from a particular retail supplier shall be deemed to be a normal retail quantity if the quantity so purchased does not in the aggregate exceed one-half carcass. The following amounts of product will be accepted as representing one-half carcass of the species identified:

One-half carcass pounds
Cattle 300
Calves 37.5
Sheep 27.5
Swine 100
Goats 25

4. A retail store is any place of business where the sales of product are made to consumers only; at least 75 percent, in terms of dollar value, of total sales of product represents sales to household consumers and the total dollar value of sales of product to consumers other than household consumers does not exceed the dollar limitation per calendar year set by the USDA Administrator; only federally or State inspected and passed product is handled or used in the preparation of any product; no sale of product is made in excess of a normal retail quantity as defined in subdivision (1)(d)(3) of this subparagraph; the preparation of products for sale to household consumers is limited to traditional and usual operations as defined in subdivision 1(d)2 of this subparagraph; and the preparation of products for sale to other than household consumers is limited to traditional and usual operations as defined in (i), (ii), (iv), and (v) of subdivision 2 of this subparagraph.

If the proposed operation will be processing non traditional meats, or will be selling to other stores or restaurants, then the facility will have to apply for the applicable license through the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) Meat Inspection Division. There are four basic choices for the type of license the facility can hold:

1. **Custom Feral Swine License** – allows for the receiving and processing of wild hogs for “Home Use Only”.
2. **Custom Licenses** – allow for the slaughter and processing of cattle, sheep, swine, ratites, goats, rabbits, horses, mules, and other “non-traditional” livestock for “Home Use Only”.
3. **State Meat Inspection** – allows for the activities in the above options, as well as the processing (under inspection) and sale of meat products within the State of Georgia. Onsite retail sales are allowed.
4. **USDA Inspection** – is basically the same as State Meat Inspection, but allows for the sale of products outside the State of Georgia.

The complete State regulations pertaining to meat processing can be found on the Georgia Department of Agriculture’s website at the following address;

http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732_0_41051097,00.html

The GDA regulations state that in order to qualify for a State Meat Inspection License, the applicant must meet the following basic requirements:

1. The facility must be constructed and equipped so that it is readily cleanable as well as rodent and insect free. The reference most often cited as a guideline for the proper meat processing facility design is the USDA Agriculture Handbook 570 entitled *U.S. Inspected Meat and Poultry Packing Plants: A Guide to Construction and Layout*. The publication is no longer available through the Government Printing Office or the USDA website, but a copy is attached for your review and use.
2. You will be required by law to have a written plan on how you are going to clean your facility and maintain it in a sanitary manner. This is called a SSOP (Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure) and training for how to properly write and then follow SSOP’s is part of most HACCP training programs (see below).

3. You will be required by law to have a written HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system) plan that details how the food safety of the products will be managed. A HACCP regulated facility (which all meat plants in Georgia are) must have one person on site during operation that has been certified as having attended an approved HACCP training program and who is responsible for overseeing the daily implementation of the facility's HACCP plan. More information on the general topic of HACCP can be found at the USDA website listed below. Information on various options for obtaining the necessary certified HACCP training can be found at the International HACCP Alliance website, and information on the UGA HACCP training programs and other assistance can be found at the UGA Extension Food Science website.

USDA HACCP Information

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Hazard_Analysis_&_Pathogen_Reduction/index.asp

International HACCP Alliance

<http://haccpalliance.org/>

UGA Food Science Extension

www.efsonline.uga.edu

4. You will be required to have a sewage certificate from the local governing authority.
5. A potable hot and cold water supply
6. Letters of guarantee from all packaging and ingredient suppliers stating that the materials planned for use have been certified as safe for consumption and are suitable for food applications.
7. Blueprints of the facility. Three sets are required and must at a minimum include a floor plan, plumbing plan, plot plan, room finish schedule, and door schedule.

The above documents and the application for inspection services can be submitted to the GDA Meat Inspection Services at the following address;

Dr. Rex Holt - Director

19 MLK, Jr. Drive, Room108

Atlanta, GA 30334

Tele: 404-656-3673

Fax: 404-657-1357

Glen Echols

Program Manager & Plant Coordinator

Alison Benefield

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Compliance Secretary & Inspection Coordinator

Food Safety Issues Specific to Ground Beef

Ground beef is one of the more closely monitored production categories that falls under the USDA inspection system. This means that a facility producing ground beef will be closely scrutinized by the inspecting authority and that the various regulations and standards that must be met by the producer are more numerous and more stringent than other categories of meat processing. Of specific concern is the potential presence of *E. coli* O157:H7 in the ground product which is a particularly dangerous human pathogen.

On October 7, 2002, FSIS published a notice requiring establishments that had not already reassessed their Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans for raw beef products in light of relevant *E. coli* O157:H7 data to do so to determine whether *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination was reasonably likely to occur in their production process for raw beef products (67 FR 62329). In that notice, FSIS advised that it intended to scrutinize very closely the hazard analyses and HACCP plans of those slaughter or deboning establishments that had conducted a reassessment and decided that an intervention was not necessary. Also in that notice, FSIS stated that establishments receiving product for grinding should address *E. coli* O157:H7. FSIS explained that these establishments could employ validated Critical Control Points (CCPs) in their HACCP plans to address *E. coli* O157:H7, or the establishments could incorporate purchase specifications in their HACCP plans, Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (Sanitation SOPs), or other prerequisite programs to prevent *E. coli* O157:H7-contaminated product from entering their establishments.

On 3/31/04 the USDA issued Directive 10,010.1 entitled “*Microbiological Testing Program and other Verification Activities for Escherichia coli O157:H7 in Raw Ground Beef Products*” which basically states that the producer should be able to show through microbiological testing that their products are free of *E. coli* O157:H7, but if they chose not to do so, that they would be subjected to intense product testing by the USDA inspection system. The requirements of this Directive place additional operational and food safety requirements on the producer which will likely result in increased costs for product testing and the need for additional personnel to manage the matching of test results with product batches and to properly manage the inventory system so as to assure that no product that tests positive is released for sale or consumption. The full text of this directive can be found on the USDA website at the following link:

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/10.010.1.pdf>

Labeling of Meat Products

The labeling of meat products is regulated by the USDA. The regulations cover standard labeling elements such as name, net weight, list of ingredients, nutrition information, etc, but also outline under what circumstances terms such as “Organic”, “Natural”, “Free Range”, “Grass Fed”, and the like are allowed. Information on the current regulations pertaining to such terms can be found at the following websites:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Meat_&_Poultry_Labeling_Terms/index.asp

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Claims_Guidance/index.asp