

**01-001 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY
DIVISION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REGULATIONS**

**Chapter 361: ON FARM RAISING, SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING OF LESS THAN 1000
READY-TO-COOK WHOLE RABBITS CARCASSES**

SUMMARY: The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the standards for registration and regulations for whole ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses that have been slaughtered and processed by the rabbit producer on the rabbit producer's farm. This chapter is specific for rabbits raised on the farm, slaughtered and processed as ready-to-cook rabbits, Chapter 332, *Rules for Rabbit Processing* and Chapter 358, *Rules for Manufacturing of Potentially Hazardous Foods*, are also in effect for rabbit producers operating under the less than 1000 whole rabbit exemption.

1. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this chapter and unless the context otherwise indicates, the following words shall have the following meanings.

- A. "Ante-mortem inspection" means the inspection of live rabbits prior to being slaughtered for sickness or disease.
- B. "Community Supported Agriculture" means an arrangement whereby individual consumers have agreements with a farmer to be provided with food or other agricultural products produced on that farm.
- C. "Interstate Commerce" means the sale or the transportation of ready to cook rabbit between different states.
- D. "Locally Owned Grocery Store" means a grocery store at least 51% of which is owned by one or more residents of the State and that has a gross floor area of 25,000 square feet or less.
- E. "Locally Owned Restaurant" means an eating establishment at least 51% is owned by one or more residents of the State and that is not a chain restaurant pursuant to 22 MRSA section 2491, subsection 2-B.
- F. "Post Mortem Inspection" means the inspection of rabbit organs and tissue for evidence of disease which would make the meat unsuitable for human food.
- G. "Principal Display Panel" means the part of the label most likely to be displayed, presented, shown, or examined under customary conditions to the consumer.
- H. "Quarantine" means a place of isolation in which live rabbits that have arrived from elsewhere or been exposed to infectious or contagious disease are placed.
- I. "Rabbit Producer" means a person that raises rabbits offered for sale.
- J. "Ready-to-Cook Rabbit" means domestic rabbit which has been slaughtered for human food, from which the head, heart, kidneys, blood, skin, feet, and inedible viscera have been removed and that is ready to cook without need of further processing.

K. “Segregation” means placing diseased rabbits in a restricted area.

2. EXEMPTION FOR FARM RAISED RABBITS SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING

- A. Live rabbits are exempted from ante mortem and post mortem inspections, quarantine, segregation and reinspection when:
- (1) Rabbits are born and raised by the rabbit producer to maturity on the farm where they are slaughtered and processed as whole ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses.
 - (2) The farm raises fewer than 1000 live rabbits that are slaughtered on the farm during a calendar year (January 1st to December 31st).
 - (3) Farm slaughtered ready-to-cook whole rabbit carcasses are not offered for sale and transported in interstate commerce.
 - (4) Processed rabbit that is sold as a ready-to-cook whole rabbit carcass shall have the head, heart, kidneys, blood, skin, feet, and inedible viscera removed.
- B. A rabbit producer is exempted from the licensing requirement of 22 MRSA §2167 if found to be in compliance with this Chapter, Chapter 332, *Rules for Rabbit Processing* and Chapter 358, *Rules for Manufacturing of Potentially Hazardous Foods*.
- C. An exempt rabbit producer of farm raised ready-to-cook whole rabbit carcasses shall submit a registration form to the Department prior to processing rabbits. The Department in accordance with 22 MRSA §2518 (1), shall annually review ready-to-cook whole rabbit processing establishments for compliance with this chapter.
- D. A rabbit producer shall permanently affix a code to product packaging or label and maintain records for:
- (1) Date the product was processed.
 - (2) Name of the product.
 - (3) Units produced.
 - (4) Size of the product.
 - (5) Code by lot.
 - (6) Location of sale.
- E. Ready-to-cook whole rabbit carcasses shall have a label affixed that meets the labeling requirements of Chapter 332 *Rabbit Processing* regulations and the following:
- (1) The label shall state:
 - i. The name of the farm.
 - ii. The name of the farm owner.
 - iii. Street address of the farm and zip code.

- iv. On-farm rabbit processing registration number issued by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry.
- v. The statement “Exempt under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 2517-E NOT INSPECTED”. The print shall be a minimum of 1/8 inch in height. The statement must be prominently displayed (BOLD) with such conspicuousness that it is likely to be read and understood.
- vi. On the principal display panel of the label there shall be SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS. These instructions must appear in lettering no less than 1/16 inch in height and “prominently with such conspicuousness as to render it likely to be read and understood under customary conditions of purchase and use.” The heading must be set in type size larger than the instructions. All safe handling information must be set off by a border and appear in one color printed on contrasting background of a single color. The instructions shall state the following:

SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep refrigerated or frozen. • Thaw in refrigerator or microwave. • Keep raw rabbit meat separate from other foods. • Wash working surfaces, including cutting boards, utensils and hands, after touching raw rabbit meat. • Cook thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit maintained for at least 15 seconds. • Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard. |
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3. RESTRICTIONS ON POINT OF SALE

- A. Ready-to cook whole rabbit carcasses that were raised, slaughtered and processed on a rabbit producer’s farm and labeled in accordance with §2(e)(1) of this rule may be sold by the rabbit producer in the following locations or manner:
 - (1) Retail sales directly to consumers by the rabbit producer from the rabbit producer’s farm.
 - (2) Retail sales by the rabbit producer directly to consumers at a farmers' market as defined in Title 7, section 415, subsection 1, paragraph A.
 - (3) Retail sales delivered to a consumer's home.
 - (4) Retail sales to an individual who is a member of a community supported agriculture farm that has a direct marketing relationship with the rabbit producer.
 - (5) Wholesaling ready-to-cook whole rabbit carcasses to a locally owned grocery store.
 - (6) Wholesaling ready-to-cook whole rabbit carcasses to a locally owned restaurant.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

22 MRS §§ 2154, 2517-E sub-§3

EFFECTIVE DATE:

February 4, 2020 – filing 2020-016