

Fewer Than 1000 Bird Exemption



Guidance for small scale poultry
operations growing fewer than 1000
birds annually

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

Quality Assurance & Regulations

The State of Maine is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider.

Our Mission

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 annually
- 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



License Requirements

No license is required to sell whole birds under the fewer than 1000 bird exemption.

There is no fee associated with the registration.



Distribution

- Direct sale to customers from the farm.
- Direct sale to local restaurants, inns and institutions
- Direct sale to customers at farmers' markets
- Indirect sale to small local food stores

***All sales are restricted to **whole** birds sold only to the local market. No sales outside the state of Maine. No sales to large and/or chain stores/restaurants.



Preparing and Handling The Birds

- Feed should be withheld from the birds 12 hours before slaughter.
- Water should be provided until slaughter.
- Birds should be handled in a manner that reduces stress:
 - Crates and holding pens free of sharp objects
 - Shade provided if birds are held outside
 - Reduce light in holding area if inside
 - Do not stack crates
 - Do not overcrowd crates in the holding area



Preparing and Handling The Birds

- Space between crates.
- Crates are clean
- Crates are not stacked
- Slaughter conducted in the early morning to reduce stress from heat.



Preparing and Handling The Birds

Steps taken to keep birds calm will reduce wing flapping and the risk of broken bones and bruising.

Broken bones and bruising reduces the quality of the bird in the eyes of the consumer.



Bleeding, Defeathering and Evisceration

Blood, feathers and fecal matter are the largest contributors of bacterial contamination.

When making plans for processing birds, consideration should be given to preventing bacterial contamination from these three major sources.

Bleeding, Defeathering and Evisceration

Open Facility

Stainless steel cones provide a cleanable surface where birds can be bled and the blood contained.

The blood is collected and later composted to help reduce insanitary condition caused by blood that is allowed to remain on the ground.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Enclosed Facility

Stainless steel cones provide a cleanable surface where birds can be bled and the blood contained.

The blood is collected and later composted to help reduce stress on the septic system.

Bleeding and defeathering is performed in a space separate from evisceration.



* Meets Fewer than 20,000 exemption requirements



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Open Facility

The scalding tank water is heated using propane. It is located between the bleeding cones and the plucker.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Open Facility

The plucker is positioned over a crate so that feathers can be collected and later composted.

The plucker is located away from fields to prevent any water runoff from reaching produce.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Enclosed Facility

The plucker is positioned near the scalding tank in a space that is separate from where the birds will be eviscerated.

***Meets Fewer than 20,000 bird exemption Requirements.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Dry Plucking

Dry plucking is an acceptable way to remove feathers from the birds. Care should be taken to make sure that feathers and/or organic matter from dry plucking is not transferred to the area where the birds will be eviscerated.

- Wash hands before eviscerating
- Check clothing for feathers/organic matter



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Evisceration

Birds are brought inside for evisceration to protect from environmental contaminants and pests.

A stainless steel table, pitched to drain, is used for evisceration. Overhead potable water lines provide water for rinsing the birds.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Eviscerating Outside

If evisceration is to be conducted outside it is recommended that consideration be given to protecting the birds from environmental contaminants and pests; awning or pop up canopy.

Consideration should be given to:

- How potable water will be made available; food grade hose.
- How fecal contamination of utensils, surfaces and hands will be dealt with; portable handwashing supplies, sanitizing solution, potable water for washing utensils and surfaces.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Evisceration

Tools used for evisceration should be free of rust and easily cleanable. Cutting boards, if used, should also be smooth and easily cleanable.

Work surface should be smooth and easily cleanable. A wooden surface is not recommended as even painted wood is subject to water permeation and subsequent bacterial growth.



Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration

Cross-Contamination

If birds are processed in batches, care should be taken to prevent cross-contamination from one bird to another.

- Rinse work surface between birds
- Do not place multiple birds in a tote between steps.

Only after the birds have been inspected and final rinsed is it considered safe to group birds together such as when chilling the birds in an ice slurry.



Final Inspection and Chilling

Each bird should be carefully inspected for any blood, feathers and/or fecal.

Each bird should be rinsed with potable water then immediately placed in a chiller.

Chilling can be accomplished in a chest filled with ice water as seen in this photo.

Birds can also be drained, packaged, labeled then immediately moved to freezer storage.



Chilling

- It is important that the birds are chilled to 40F or below as quickly as possible; 4-8 hours is recommended.
- The longer it takes to chill birds to 40F the greater the risk for bacterial growth.
- Bird must be chilled to 40F or below before selling to customers.



Packaging and Labeling

Each bird must be packaged and labeled with 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).



Facilities

If building new or using an existing structure it is important to remember that processing poultry requires the use of water. Water can increase damage to the structure as well as create places for bacteria to grow if allowed to permeate walls and floors. Exposed wood, even painted, should be avoided if possible. Walls and floors should be made of smooth and easily cleanable materials. A floor drain will help move water off the floor and allow the area to dry.



Facilities

Floors

This floor is missing grout and is no longer cleanable. Food soil will collect in the grout lines and become a place where bacteria will grow.



Facilities

Floors

The concrete along the wall/floor joint of this floor is damaged, most likely from water.

Concrete floors need to be in good repair and sealed to prevent water damage and bacterial growth.



Facilities

Floors

This concrete floor has been sealed. The wall/floor joint is tight to prevent water from getting up in behind the wall covering.

Smooth and easily cleanable



Facilities

Floors

It is important that floors in areas that are exposed to water have a drain. The drain needs to adequately carry water away from the process room.

- Standing water will increase the amount of damage to the space.
- Floors that do not drain adequately are difficult to clean.
- Standing water will increase the amount of splash on walls and equipment caused by foot traffic.
- Standing water creates a place for bacterial growth.

A floor that is subject to water permeation will eventually create a condition that attracts pests, harbors bacteria and causes structural damage.



Facilities

Walls

Walls should be impermeable to moisture. Painted drywall is not a recommended wall covering for a poultry processing area due to the amount of water that is used. A metal covering that is subject to rust is also not recommended.

Attention should be given to window and door trim as well. These areas are subject to water damage if not adequately protected.



Facilities

Walls

Concrete walls that are inadequately sealed will allow water moisture permeation.

This wall is not cleanable and is a place where bacteria can grow.



Facilities

Walls

This wall is covered with fiberglass reinforced plastic along the lower four feet. The upper portion of the wall is painted with a high gloss paint.

The wall covering is sealed along the top and bottom as well as along panel seams.



Facilities

Plumbing

Consideration should be given as to how potable water will be delivered to the facility and how waste water will be carried away.

- Waste water that is drained direct to the outside may create an area that will attract pests, cause odors and/or create an overall insanitary condition.

Sinks should be constructed of materials that are smooth and easily cleanable and not subject to rust.

- Recommend a handwash sink and a 2 bay sink to allow for handwashing and equipment cleaning.



Facilities

Ventilation

Providing adequate ventilation to the space is very important. Adequate ventilation will allow the area to dry after cleaning. Spaces that have poor ventilation are subject microbial growth and odors.

Adequate ventilation will help reduce both bacterial growth and structural damage caused by damp conditions.

Sanitation

Sanitizing Solution

An effective sanitizing solution can be made using **Germicidal Bleach** and water. **Germicidal bleach** is not found in grocery stores or large department stores, but is readily available at Home Depot, Lowe's, Staples, some local hardware stores, and some restaurant supply stores.

1 capful of **Germicidal Bleach** in 1 gallon of water = 200ppm Free Chlorine

Germicidal Bleach labeled as concentrated requires only ½ capful/gallon of water or 1 capful in 2 gallons of water.

(The word **Germicidal** will be clearly marked on the label)



Chlorine Sanitizing Solution



Germicidal

200ppm Free Chlorine solution is tested using chlorine test papers



Different types of Test papers.



Sanitation

Sanitizing Solution

The sanitizing solution can be used after rinsing contaminated utensils and/or work surfaces during the evisceration process.

It is important to know that a sanitizing solution alone will not 'clean' equipment, utensils and work surfaces. Surfaces need to be washed with hot water (110F) and detergent first to remove the food soil, then rinsed with hot water (110F) to remove the detergent from the surface. After the surface has been adequately washed, the sanitizing solution can be applied and allowed to air dry. A rinse after applying the sanitizing solution is not necessary.



Contact Information and Help

For more information feel free to contact our office at 207.287.3841 or your area field inspector.

We look forward to helping you grow your business.



THANK YOU



QUESTIONS?

www.maine.gov/agriculture

207-287-3841

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