

Meat Requirements

Except for special exempt cases, all meat and processed poultry sold in Connecticut must be USDA inspected. This requirement extends to the slaughter, processing and packaging stages. Any meat that is slaughtered, processed or packaged outside of USDA inspection is not legal for sale in Connecticut

Slaughtering and processing

All meat and poultry products sold in the state of Connecticut must be slaughtered and processed under USDA inspection. Please be aware that just because an animal has been slaughtered in a USDA inspected facility does not mean that the carcass can be taken to another facility to be cut and packaged unless that facility is also under USDA-FSIS inspection and the processing takes place under USDA inspection.

Special exemption for retail processing

As indicated above there are exemptions from inspection for meat and poultry products. The most common is a "Retail Exemption" or "Butcher Shop Exemption" for meat processing at retail at an establishment with a **retail store operation**. The store can acquire bulk cuts of meat, such as halves or quarters, from an inspected USDA/FSIS slaughter facility for further processing and packaging of meat cuts for direct sale to consumers. As an example grocery stores are able to butcher and package, without continuous inspection, larger cuts of meat into smaller portions, such as chops or roasts, for sale to the consumer

Labeling

Labels must include the following information under USDA and Connecticut regulations:

- Species, primal source and standard descriptive term (retail name)
- Name of packaging firm
- Address of packaging firm
- Net weight
- Price per pound
- Total package price
- Whether the product is boneless or bone-in
- Safe handling label
- List of all ingredients for multi-ingredient products such as sausage
- Species and primal source or area if not a multi-ingredient product as follows:
 - Beef:
cheeks, tongue, gullets or esophagus, shoulder, chuck, heart, brisket, shank, shin, rib, plate, diaphragm, loin, flank, rump, top round or bottom round
 - Veal

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cheeks, tongue, gullets, or esophagus, heart, neck, shank, breast, shoulder, rib, loin, sirloin, rump or leg.

□ Lamb

cheeks, tongue, gullets or esophagus, heart, neck, shank, breast, shoulder, rib, loin or leg

□ Pork

cheeks, tongue, gullets or esophagus, heart, tail, jowl, shoulder, shoulder picnic, shoulder butt, feet, side, spareribs, loin, loin-shoulder end or loin-rib end, loin-center cut, loin-loin end, fat back or ham

Packaging and retail sale

The bottom of the package must be at least 70% visible and labeling on top of the package must not exceed the specified area in relation to the total package size. There are exemptions to this rule for ground meat, liver and sausage. If minimum visibility requirements are not met, a “100% Guarantee” label must be provided on each package and honored by the vendor. Any repackaging must be done following the provisions of sections 21a-101-1 through 21a-101-8 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies

All retail meat sales rooms are subject to Department of Consumer Protection approval/inspection and must comply with the Connecticut sanitary standards for food establishments (see citation below) and all local authorities including the local health department/district, fire marshal and zoning requirements.

Sale of animal for custom slaughter or “custom exempt”

“Custom exempt” is a USDA provision that applies to live animals that have been purchased by a customer and are slaughtered per customer request. These animals are either slaughtered and processed by the owner or slaughtered and processed at the request of the owner on a custom basis by the farmer from whom it was purchased.

“Custom exempt” is regulated under USDA- FSIS - Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). “Custom exempt” meat must be labeled “Not for Retail Sale” and is intended for consumption by the owner and may not be resold. Food service establishments in the state of Connecticut may not purchase “custom exempt” meat.

Handling

Meat that has never been frozen must be kept at 41°-33°F at all times and frozen meat must be maintained frozen at all times. It is of critical importance that these standards be maintained. It is also of critical importance that any frozen product, once thawed be maintained at 32°-41°F. The maintenance of appropriate holding temperatures is subject to inspection at farmers’ markets.

For further information or clarification on federal requirements, please contact:
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Food Safety & Inspection Service (USDA FSIS)

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For further information on the inspection of and regulations concerning the sale of meat in Connecticut, please contact:

Department of Consumer Protection
Division of Food and Standards
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 713-6160
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Connecticut General Statute references

Sec. 42-115m-q – Packaging of Meat
Sec. 21a-100 – Labeling of Meat

Associated state regulations

Sec. 42-155m-1 through 42-155m-7 (*Regulations Concerning the Packaging of Meat and Meat Products*)
Sec. 21a-100-1 through 21a-100-6 (*Regulations Concerning the Labeling of Various Cuts of Meats*)
Sec. 21a-101-1 through 21a-101-8 (*Regulations Concerning Sanitary Standards for Food Establishments*)

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