

How to Become a Meat and Poultry Handler

To initiate the registration process, call the NCDA&CS Meat and Poultry Inspection Division at 919-707-3180. The receptionist will take down your name, address and phone number and may ask a few questions to ensure a Meat and Poultry Handler's Registration is required for your new business venture. This information will be forwarded to the appropriate field personnel. A member of our field staff will contact you to arrange an appointment for an on-site visit to set up your registration.

This on-site visit is free of charge. Department employees conducting the Meat and Poultry Handler registration review process will be checking for the following:

- All meat and poultry products are properly marked, labeled and wholesome.
- Storage units such as coolers or freezers are clean, in good repair, and are able to keep product at a safe temperature
- Storage units are dedicated for the meat and poultry products you will be offering for sale (no other personal items inside)
- Storage units are indoors and the general housekeeping around the coolers / freezers is such that it does not pose a sanitation hazard to the meat and poultry products inside
- Adequate pest control measures are taken to maintain sanitary conditions in the area where product is stored
- Any damaged or returned product is properly disposed of

Our field personnel revisit each registered meat and poultry handler at least annually for review.

Answers to commonly asked questions

Q: How much does it cost to obtain a Meat and Poultry Handler's Registration?

A: There is no fee for this registration.

Q: How long does it take to obtain a Meat and Poultry Handler's Registration?

In most cases, field personnel can arrange a visit with you within one week of notification by our office. Once on-site, the registration typically takes around 2 hours. If all requirements are met, you will be issued a temporary license so you can immediately start selling product. Allow another 7-10 days for the completed registration to be processed by our office and a final copy mailed to you.

Q: Do I have to have product on hand prior to registration?

It is preferred that product is available to ensure it is properly marked, labeled and wholesome. If product is not available, the person conducting the registration may have to make a second visit.

Q: Do I have to purchase a refrigerated truck to transport product?

No. Product must be transported in a manner that is sanitary and that prevents perishable product from temperature abuse. A refrigerated truck is not required. Some Meat and Poultry Handlers use portable ice chest style coolers (which contain alternative cooling methods), or have a cooler/freezer unit on the back of a pick up truck powered by an inverter or other alternative cooling method.

Q: Can I sell at any farmer's market once I have my Meat and Poultry Handler's Registration?

Your registration allows you to sell meat and poultry products anywhere in North Carolina. However, farmer's markets operate independently and set their own rules about what type products they will allow to be sold on their premises.

It is advised to contact the farmer's market ahead of time to learn their policies. Some farmer's markets may require perishable meat and poultry products to be stored and displayed under active refrigeration in self contained temperature controlled freezers or refrigeration units. Other markets allow perishable products to be sold from ice chests with alternative cooling methods.

Q: Can I have a label made with my farm name on it instead of the name of the packing plant that processed my animals?

Yes, as long as the packing plant you use will agree to do this for you.

Q: I would like to have "All Natural Angus Beef" and "Raised without Antibiotics or Added Hormones" on my label. How can I do this?

The approval process for labeling claims is as follows:

The owner of the inspected establishment that is applying the label must submit the label to the appropriate agency for claim approval.

For products slaughtered and processed in facilities under Federal Inspection, the label approval request, FSIS Form 7234-1, available from their in-plant inspector, along with documentation to support the claim must be submitted by the establishment owner to the USDA Labeling and Consumer Protection Branch in Washington DC. Questions about necessary documentation for supporting claims may be addressed to:

USDA, FSIS, OPPD, LPDD
Labeling Distribution Unit

5601 Sunnyside Avenue, STOP 5273
Beltsville, MD 20705
Phone: 301-504-0879

For products slaughtered and processed in facilities under State Inspection, the label approval request, MPIS Form 11, available from their in-plant inspector, along with documentation to support the claim must be submitted by the establishment owner to the NCDA&CS, Meat and Poultry Inspection Division in Raleigh, NC, via their in-plant inspector. Questions about necessary documentation for supporting claims may be addressed to:

NCDA&CS Meat and Poultry Inspection Division
1001 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1001
Phone: 919-707-3180