



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2014 January 16

MEAT PROCESSING INSPECTIONS: NEW RESPONSIBILITY

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 011-14 re Meat Processing Inspections: New Responsibility be received for information.

Key Points

- Amendments to *Ontario Meat Regulation 31/05* came into effect on January 1, 2014
- The three amendments result in OMAF inspectors concentrating on slaughter plants and high risk free standing meat plants
- Public Health Inspectors at Ontario health units now have responsibility for inspecting lower risk and lower volume free standing meat plants

Background

Meat processing plants in the province of Ontario are considered either Slaughter Plants or Free Standing Meat Plants (FSMP). The processing at FSMP may include aging, cutting, slicing, tenderizing, packaging, canning, curing, fermenting or smoking. Prior to 2005, Public Health Inspectors (PHI) from health units inspected Free Standing Meat Plants (FSMP) as they are, by definition, “food premises” falling under the authority of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) or the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF), were responsible for licensing and inspecting Slaughter Plants.

In 2004, Justice Haines recommended in his [*Report of the Meat Regulatory and Inspection Review*](#) having all FSMPs fall under the jurisdiction of OMAF and the newly created [*Ontario Meat Regulation 31/05*](#). This new regulation replaced the *Meat Inspection Act* and OMAF became responsible for licensing and inspecting all FSMPs in the province of Ontario. This regulatory structure was recently brought into question as it relates to the Ontario government’s Open for Business initiative, particularly as it contributed to inefficiencies with inspection processes, and unnecessary challenges for industry.

In 2013, amendments to *Ontario Meat Regulation 31/05* were proposed by OMAF to allow for a more efficient and effective provincial meat inspection program. Under the proposed amendments, OMAF would be able to concentrate their licensing and inspection duties in Slaughter Plants and high risk meat processing plants. On June 7th, 2013, a multi-agency workshop was hosted by OMAF in Guelph ON, to discuss the proposed amendments and to garner feedback from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), public health units and various industry representatives.

As of January 1, 2014, 3 amendments to the Ontario Meat Regulation 31/05 have come into effect.

Amendments to Ontario Meat Regulation 31/05

The 3 amendments are as follows:

Food product exemption: OMAF will no longer license or inspect businesses that prepare products with less than 25% meat (by weight). Examples of such products may include pizza, sandwiches or lasagnas.

Volume distribution exemption: OMAF will no longer license or inspect businesses if the business only performs low risk processing activities (cutting, slicing and packaging) and most of the product is sold directly to the customer from a retail store. To be exempt from the regulation, businesses must either sell less than 25 per cent or less than 20,000 kg of their products annually, wholesale.

Food service exemption: OMAF will no longer license or inspect food processing activities at premises where the main business is preparing and serving meals to customers (restaurants, caterers etc.).

Conclusion/Next Steps

In an effort to address the food safety gap resulting from the above-noted exemptions to the *Ontario Meat Regulation*, the MOHLTC has advised health units to again take on the food premises inspection responsibility for those exempted FSMPs. The monitoring and inspection of meat processing activities conducted at restaurants, caterers, butcher shops etc. (formerly licensed and inspected by OMAF) are again the responsibility of local health units. The MOHLTC has committed to provide PHI refresher-training sessions early in 2014 regarding high risk meat processing activities (curing, smoking, fermenting etc.). The additional workload for the Food Safety Team, created by these changes, has yet to be determined; however there has been no commitment from the MOHLTC to provide additional PHI resources to complete the added inspection responsibilities. Staff will monitor the impact of the additional workload on their ability to complete their mandated inspection frequencies and report back to the Board at a later date.

This report was prepared by Mr. David Pavletic, Manager of Food Safety.



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Medical Officer of Health

This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Food Safety Standard – Requirements 1 and 3; Food Safety Protocol – Requirements 1 and 2(d)
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