



Fact Sheet
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Washington State Poultry Processing Regulations

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Please note: the information in this fact sheet is our best understanding of the current state laws and regulations at the time of publication. If there is a conflict between what is written and what is contained in law, the applicable law prevails. Laws and regulations also are subject to change. Please refer to the contacts listed for the most up-to-date information.

Growing consumer demand for locally grown, humanely-raised, organic and/or pastured meat creates new opportunities for small-scale poultry producers. Careful planning and a good understanding of the regulations surrounding the processing, handling, and marketing of poultry meat is essential. With the proper license or permit, a producer can sell his or her poultry meat to retail outlets such as restaurants, grocery stores, and farmers markets, or straight from the farm. This Fact Sheet is designed to help poultry producers understand Washington State regulations and provide resources for a successful poultry enterprise.

This fact sheet includes:

- an overview of permits and licenses available to poultry producers;
- facility requirements for poultry processing;
- additional processing options;
- selling and labeling certified organic poultry;
- requirements for selling poultry at farmers markets and farm stands;
- poultry processing equipment lending programs;
- Mobile Poultry Processing Units;
- USDA Inspected Poultry Processing Plants;
- ratites and rabbits; and
- helpful resources on poultry processing.

Figuring out which licenses and permits apply to a poultry business can be a daunting task. It may be difficult to see the benefit of going through the process, especially when pressed with so many other expenses and responsibilities. Benefits to getting the proper permit or license to process poultry include:

Opening up new marketing alternatives

With the proper permit or license, your poultry may be legally sold to customers from your farm, to restaurants, grocery stores, at farmers markets and via the Internet.

Capturing more value for your poultry meat

By accessing direct markets, producers can capture the full retail value of poultry, increasing profits. For example, as of August 2009, direct marketed whole chickens are selling on average for \$3.50 to \$5.75 per pound.

Building customer trust and loyalty

By acquiring the appropriate licenses, you can demonstrate to your customers that you are following all state regulations and food safety practices that ensure a safe, quality product.

Reducing business risk

In order for your product liability insurance to be valid, your carrier will require you to be properly licensed. Being licensed also enables you to advertise without concern for regulatory repercussions.

Influencing agricultural policies in Washington State

Being licensed creates an opportunity for direct feedback to state agencies, so that they can improve rules to better serve farmers and consumers alike. The more producers that are licensed, the greater their voice becomes in the policy arena. In addition, as a producer you have a responsibility to your fellow producers to maintain a legal and safe infrastructure to protect both the public and your rights to continue processing.

WASHINGTON STATE POULTRY PROCESSING PERMITS & LICENSES

Poultry processing in the United States is regulated by the Federal Poultry Products Inspection Act. This includes chicken, geese, duck, turkey and other domesticated birds raised for meat.

In Washington State, there are currently two ways that small-scale poultry producers may be exempted from this Act. One is the **WSDA Special Poultry Permit** and the other is by getting a **WSDA Food Processors License**.

The WSDA Food Safety Program is available for one-on-one technical assistance with the licensing process, a processing facility design and construction materials, equipment, cooling procedures, water source, and food safety techniques to prevent cross-contamination of poultry products. Please contact WSDA Food Safety Program directly before submitting your licensing application at (360) 902-1876 or email foodsafety@agr.wa.gov or go online to www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors.

Which Permit or License do I need?

The below four questions can help a producer figure out if he or she needs a WSDA Specialty Poultry Permit or Food Processor License:

1. How many birds will you process in a calendar year?
2. Do you want to sell whole birds?
3. Do you want to sell to retail markets such as restaurants, grocery stores or at farmers markets?
4. Do you want to sell outside of Washington State?

Overview of Poultry Processing Permits & Licenses

	WSDA Special Poultry Permit	WSDA Food Processor License	USDA FSIS Inspected Facility
Number of Birds? (per year)	up to 1,000	up to 20,000	unlimited
Whole or processed (into cuts, frozen, etc)?	whole only	whole or processed	whole or processed
Marketing?	direct to end consumer	direct and retail	direct and retail
Sales allowed outside of Washington State?	no	no	yes

WSDA Special Poultry Permit

Farms selling less than 1,000 slaughtered poultry of any species in a calendar year may operate with a WSDA Special Poultry Permit¹. This permit allows the farm business to sell processed whole birds within 48 hours of slaughter.

Poultry must be sold fresh. This permit does not allow further processing, parting out, vacuum sealing or freezing of birds.

They must be sold directly to the end consumer from the farm. Whole birds are sold only from the property of the Washington farm where the poultry was raised and processed. The customer must come to the farm and pick up the birds.

This permit does not allow farms to sell processed poultry at farmers markets, direct to restaurants or grocery stores, or ship processed birds via the mail or other service.

The WSDA's "Handbook for Special Poultry Permit to Slaughter, Prepare and Sell Whole Raw Poultry" is a really great place to start. This resource includes over twenty FAQ covering everything from record keeping to composting offal. www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/TempChickenSlaughter/Handbook.aspx

How to Get the WSDA Special Poultry Permit

The first step is to contact Food Safety and discuss your plans with an inspector. Food safety inspectors are a terrific resource and wealth of knowledge on how to ensure that the processing set up and practices meet state standards. You will then need to submit an application to the WSDA Food Safety Program. The key is to apply early to give Food Safety enough time to work with you.

For many, the most challenging aspect of the application is the "Slaughter/Preparation Site Diagram" and "Detailed Processing Steps or Flow Diagram." To avoid confusion with your food safety application, be sure to include as much detail into these diagrams as possible. The major steps involved (e.g. kill,

¹ The Special Poultry Permit was formerly known as the "Temporary Permit to Slaughter Pastured Chickens." The Special Poultry Permit came into effect in July 2009. This permit now includes **all** poultry (not just pastured chickens).

scald, pluck, eviscerate, rinse, and chill) **MUST** be included in the flow charts, and any additional layers of detail will help to ensure a smooth licensing process.

Once the Food Safety Program has received the application, a trained WSDA food safety inspector will come to the farm to verify that the facility, slaughter and processing is done in compliance with state food safety requirements. Inspections include an evaluation of personnel, grounds, butcher facility construction and design, sanitary operations, pest control, sanitary facilities and controls, equipment and utensils, processes and controls, labeling and licensing. Preventing overhead contamination, having food grade surfaces, and chilling tend to be key areas of concern.

It is best to schedule your inspection on a day when you can do a dry run. Not having customers on farm the same day gives you time to address any issues. Your inspector will give you the green or red light. Once approved, your certificate will be mailed to you.

The permit application asks for your projected slaughter dates. You must provide prior written communication of slaughter date additions or deletions to the Food Safety Program at least one week before the change.

To avoid a backlog, please apply for and obtain the permit at least 6 weeks before your first slaughter date.

The fee for this permit is \$75.00 for one calendar year (January 1 to December 31) or \$125.00 for two years. The two-year option was introduced and approved in July 2009.

An applications and more information is available online at www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FSP/ or call (360) 902-1876 or email foodsafety@agr.wa.gov.

WSDA Food Processor License

There are three main reasons a farm would require a WSDA Food Processor License to process poultry. The farm is planning to:

1. Process between 1,001 and 19,999 birds a year; **OR**
2. Sell to retail markets; **OR**
3. Process further (i.e. cut into pieces), freeze or otherwise alter poultry.

The WSDA Food Processor License allows farms to process **up to** 19,999 meat poultry. You can process less than 1,000 with the Food Processor License. However, if you are planning to process 1,001 up to 19,999 in a year, then you are required to get the Food Processor License.

One of the key benefits is that the Food Processor License allows farms to sell processed poultry directly from the farm, at farmers markets, on the Internet, to hotels, restaurants, food service institutions, grocery stores, or through wholesale food distribution in Washington State.

The Food Processor License allows poultry to be further processed, for example breaking down the whole bird into individual cuts (or “parted out”) or freezing. The license also allows vacuum sealing if the product will be frozen.

This permit does not allow out of state sales.

How to Get the WSDA Food Processor License

To get a WSDA Food Processor License, visit food safety online “food processor” overview. It is available online at www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/ or by calling (360) 902-1876 or by email foodsafety@agr.wa.gov.

Like the Specialty Poultry Permit, producers should start by contacting the WSDA Food Safety Program to discuss your plans (contact information below). You will need to submit an application to the WSDA Food Safety Program. The application includes a Sanitation Schedule, Intended Type of Process (#12 is poultry butchering), Ingredient/Processing Information, a Floor Plan of where you will be processing poultry, Proposed Labeling, questions about your Water Supply and Testing. Allow extra time for getting your water system approved for your facility, as this can take weeks and/or months.

Applications are available online at www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FSP/ or call (360) 902-1876 or email foodsafety@agr.wa.gov.

There is also a fee due with the application. The fee is based on sales volume and starts at \$55.00 per year for gross sales up to \$50,000.

WSDA Food Processor License Fee Schedule

If gross annual sales are:	The license fee is:
\$0 to \$50,000	\$ 55.00
\$50,001 to \$500,000	110.00
\$500,001 to \$1,000,000	220.00
\$1,000,001 to \$5,000,000	385.00
\$5,000,001 to \$10,000,000	550.00
Greater than \$10,000,000	825.00

Once Food Safety reviews your application, a local Food Safety Officer will contact you within 4 to 6 weeks. He or she will need to inspect your processing site to ensure it meets all the state requirements and to answer any questions.

WSDA POULTRY PROCESSING FACILITY & WATER REQUIREMENTS

The Special Poultry Permit and Food Processor License have different requirements for facilities, lighting, bathrooms and water (from private wells). The sanitation and cooling and refrigeration requirements are the same.

WSDA Special Poultry Permit

Facilities



No permanent building is required.

Protection from overhead, side and ground contamination is required. When insects, dust, mud, pests, or other contamination is likely to occur, a temporary set up including tarps, canopies, floor mats, etc., may be used. A grassy, clean and pesticide-free pasture could qualify. If there is no potential for overhead/ground contamination, the entire slaughter, processing, and bagging operation could occur outside.

At least one hand washing station must be accessible on site (temporary options are available).

Lighting

Lighting only needs to be provided if slaughtering at night or in low light conditions.

Bathroom

At least one toilet must be available and conveniently located at the poultry slaughter site. This can be an adequate home bathroom.

Water

Public or municipal water supplies meet requirements for potable water.

If you are on a private well, your local or county health department or Washington State Department of Health (DOH) must approve the water source. Water source approval means the structure used to deliver the water must meet the State DOH requirements for potable water.

Additionally the water must have a passing bacterial test conducted within 60 days previous to permit application.

Potable water may be hauled into the processing site as long as the water is safe and sanitary. The transport vessel that is used must be capable of maintaining the sanitary quality of the water.

Please see Attachment C "Water Supply Requirements" of the Special Poultry Permit application for detailed information.

WSDA Food Processor License

Facilities



You must have a separate facility dedicated to the commercial processing operation only. Your home kitchen cannot serve as this facility; however, your separate processing facility may be located in your home.

Slaughtering and plucking may occur outdoors in a covered area. The rest of the processing must occur indoors. Specific requirements include:

- Equipment, worktables and counters must be in good repair and have surfaces that are easily cleaned and non-corrosive.
- Floors must be made of material that can be cleaned and must be in good repair. Typically vinyl linoleum or tile floor coverings are sufficient for small operations

where vacuuming and wet mopping provide sufficient clean up. *Unfinished wood floors are NOT suitable in any areas.*

- Walls must be covered with a washable, non-porous, non-corrosive, smooth material that will not deteriorate when it gets wet.
- Sinks may be 3-compartment or 2-compartment; please check with your inspector. Food handlers must have access to one or more hand washing facilities with hot and cold running water, soap, single service towels, and hand wash signs.

Lighting

Adequate lighting must be provided and be shatter-proof. The fixtures should be located above equipment or areas where food is exposed.

Bathroom

An adequate home bathroom is sufficient if only family members work in the processing facility. When a processor hires anyone outside of the immediate family to process poultry, then a separate bathroom is required.

Water

Public or municipal water supplies meet requirements for potable water.

If you are on a private well, you will need to meet Washington State Department of Health's requirements for a Group A or B water system. The system required will depend on the number of employees and the number of days you operate.

Please see Attachment E "Water Supply Testing Requirements" of the Food Processor License application for detailed information.

Sanitary practices for both Specialty Poultry Permit and Food Processor License

Hand washing is critical to food safety, regardless of your permit or license. Hands must be washed thoroughly before starting *and* between each preparation step as well as after every break. At least one hand washing station must be accessible on site (see above).

Cooling and refrigeration requirements for both Specialty Poultry Permit and Food Processor License

Processed poultry must be cooled to 45 degrees Fahrenheit within four hours of slaughter (unless they are sold within four hours). Producer will need to demonstrate the availability and efficiency of your equipment -- coolers, boxes, refrigerators, freezers (only for Food Processor License), etc -- for storage and transport prior to permit or license approval.

When poultry is processed, a temperature control must be used to monitor slaughter cool down temperatures to ensure proper chilling. A calibrated thermometer inserted into the first bird slaughtered and then monitored will work. You must record this cooling time.

Co-packing under the WSDA Food Processor License

The Poultry Products Inspection Act's (PPIA) "exemption to the exemption" can be requested by a WSDA licensed facility to process birds from multiple producers (also known as co-packing). It states: "The facility used to slaughter or process the poultry is not used to slaughter or process another person's poultry unless the Administrator of FSIS grants an exemption [PPIA Section 464(c)(3); Title 9 CFR 381.10(b)(2)]."

The term "exempt" means that certain types of poultry slaughter and processing facilities may qualify to operate without daily Federal inspection or a grant of Federal inspection. Such facilities are exempt from continuous bird-by-bird inspection and the presence of inspectors during the slaughter of poultry and processing of poultry products.

However, a facility operating under such an exemption must still comply with all other requirements of the PPIA and all facilities slaughtering or processing poultry for human use, including exempt operations, must produce products that are not adulterated or misbranded.

All poultry processed under any exemption of the PPIA and offered for sale must have a label with the producer's name, producer's address, and the statement, "Exempt P.L. 90-492." If the poultry is processed by another facility operating under this exemption, the label must state that the bird was processed by that facility and distributed by the producer of the bird.

To request an exemption to the PPIA, contact the regional **USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service District Office** in Denver at (303) 236-9800 or www.fsis.usda.gov.

MOBILE POULTRY PROCESSING UNITS (MPPUs)

Mobile Processing Units (MPUs) are allowed to operate in the state of Washington. MPUs can be a feasible way for small producers to process poultry and share in the cost of the facility with other producers. The mobile unit must meet regulatory requirements for a WSDA Licensed Food Processing facility. It must be fully enclosed; however, killing and plucking can occur, under cover, outside of the unit. Each producer using the mobile unit must obtain a WSDA Food Processor License and can process up to 19,999 birds, each, per year.

The first WSDA-licensed Mobile Processing Poultry Unit serves Ferry and Stevens Counties and was a joint project of Community Agricultural Development Center (CADC) and WSU Stevens County Extension. For more information please contact Al Kowitz with CADC at (509) 499-1360 or go to: www.communityagcenter.org/Poultry%20Unit.htm. Additional information from WSU Stevens County Extension can be found at <http://stevens.wsu.edu/Agriculture/poultryproject.htm>.

The Puget Sound Meat Producers Cooperative is planning to add poultry processing to their MPU in the spring of 2010. Please check their website at www.psmc.com for updates or contact Cheryl Ouellette at (253) 278-3609.

USDA INSPECTED POULTRY PROCESSING FACILITIES in WA

USDA inspection is required for businesses that slaughter and process 20,000 or more birds per year and/or sell their birds outside of Washington State. Please contact the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service for more information.

USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service District Office (for WA)

Denver Federal Center, PO Box 25387, Building 45, Denver, CO 80225
(303) 236-9800 or www.fsis.usda.gov

The FSIS has a listing of USDA inspected plants online that is updated monthly; search for “poultry inspection directory” from the FSIS home page. You should find a “Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory.”

www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Meat_Poultry_Egg_Inspection_Directory/index.asp

A helpful publication to determine if a farm is exempt from USDA inspection, “Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing Operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act” can be found at:

www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0406.pdf.

RATITES & RABBITS:

Large birds such as ostrich, emu, and rhea (ratites) **can be processed in USDA inspected facilities or facilities that are licensed by WSDA as a Food Processor.** Processors licensed by WSDA as a Food Processor may slaughter 19,999 or less large birds per year. These processors must apply to the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service for exemption from inspection. Each bird or package for sale must be marked or tagged, “Exempted under PL 90-492” and include the name and address of the processor. For more information, please contact the WSDA Food Safety Program.

Rabbits are also allowed to be processed with a WSDA Food Processor License. There is no limit to the number of rabbits that can be processed this way.

SELLING & LABELING CERTIFIED ORGANIC POULTRY

If any operation makes organic claims (i.e. on a label, farm name, etc.) and it grosses over \$5,000 annually, it must become certified by an accredited certifying agency. In the Northwest most producers either certify with the WSDA Organic Food Program or Oregon Tilth. In addition, Oregon’s Department of Agriculture is now accredited to do organic certification.

Producers, who process their own birds and want to sell chicken labeled “Organic Chicken” (or turkey or duck, etc.), need to become both a certified organic producer and a certified organic processor. Organic producers may also label poultry products in this manner if they process their birds at a certified organic licensed slaughter facility.

Another option is to label the poultry “organically raised.” In this situation, the grower must be a certified organic producer, but he or she does not need to be a certified organic processor. They cannot make organic claims on the processing of their products, but they can make claims to reflect the organic production methods employed when raising the animals.

Organic Label

Organic Certifications Required

“organic chicken”

Must be raised by a certified organic producer
AND processed by a certified organic processor

“organically raised”

Must be raised by a certified organic producer

Please contact the WSDA Organic Food Program to discuss your plans before you start advertising or labeling anything as “Organic.” They can be reached at (360) 902-1805 or organic@agr.wa.gov or www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/.

REQUIREMENTS for SELLING POULTRY MEAT at FARMERS MARKETS & FARM STANDS



Janelle Stokesberry holding a chicken and a dozen eggs from Stokesberry Sustainable Farms in Olympia. Photo copyright 2009 by Zachary D. Lyons.

Poultry meat sold at farmers markets or farm stands needs be processed by a licensed WSDA Food Processor.

The local health department sets the rules for the retail selling of meat and poultry products at farmers markets and farm stands in their jurisdiction (usually a county).

Rules vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some health departments allow fresh meat (whether chicken or red meat) if it is under mechanical refrigeration at 38° F. Some allow only frozen products in coolers that maintain solid frozen product at markets. Both options require producers to have permits from local health departments. Be aware that some health departments require a different permit for each different market site or day.

Permits range from \$25.00 per season to \$600 per season. Check with the health department early on to find out what options are available and the associated costs because permitting can take time.

All farmers markets will require that producers have the proper state and county licenses and permits to sell products. In addition, ask the market manager for electricity and voltage specifics before buying an electrical refrigeration unit.

To find one of the more than 110 member markets of the Washington State Farmers Market Association go to: www.wafarmersmarkets.com or call (206) 706-5198.

POULTRY PROCESSING EQUIPMENT LENDING PROGRAMS

In recent years, several new programs have emerged to lend poultry processing equipment to producers for a small fee in Washington. Most of these programs provide a large, thermostatically-controlled scalding, a drum picker or plucker and kill cones. In most cases, the producer is required to provide propane, water, electricity, and all other required equipment.

Below is contact information for current Poultry Processing Equipment Lending Programs:

Mason County & Surrounding Counties

Mason Conservation District
450 W Business Park Road
Shelton, WA 98584
(360) 427-9436

Whatcom County

Whatcom Pastured Poultry Group
5050 Graveline Rd.
Bellingham, WA 98226
(360) 384-4821
maczuga@clearwire.net
Contact: Terry MacGuza

Thurston County & Surrounding Counties

Thurston Conservation District
2918 Ferguson Street SW, Building 1, Suite A
Tumwater, WA 98512
(360) 754-3588
tcd@thurstoncd.com
www.thurstoncd.com
Contact: Tony Riccardo or Brian Thompson

Benton County & Surrounding Counties

CG Ranch
22207 W Gerrick Rd
Benton City, WA 99320
(509) 723-1621
russstaska@netscape.net
Contact: Russ Staska

Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, & Whatcom Counties

Northwest Agriculture Business Center
419 South 1st St, Suite 200
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273-2924
(360) 336-3727 or (888) 707-2021
info@agbizcenter.org
www.agbizcenter.org
Contact: Jake Fowler



HELPFUL RESOURCES on POULTRY PROCESSING

American Pastured Poultry Producers Association: www.apppa.org

Chicken Tractor Designs: www.puyallup.wsu.edu/soilmgmt/SusAg_PoultryCages.htm

Featherman Video Demos: www.featherman.net/videodemos.html

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: www.attra.ncat.org

Niche Meat Processors Assistance Network: www.nichemeatprocessing.org

Sustainable Poultry: www.sustainablepoultry.ncat.org

WSDA Food Safety Program: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FSP/>

WSDA Organic Food Program: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/>

WSDA Small Farms and Direct Marketing Program: <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/>

Washington State University Small Farms: www.smallfarms.wsu.edu/animals/poultry.html

Washington State University Organic Farming Systems & Nutrient Management, Pastured Poultry: www.puyallup.wsu.edu/soilmgmt/SusAg_PasturedPoultry.htm

For more copies of this fact sheet or additional information, please contact:

Kirsten Workman
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kworkman@wsu.edu

We welcome your suggestions on how to improve this fact sheet.

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Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension Office.

