

Selling Red Meat in Vermont

How the Farm Fresh Meat Bill Could Change the Landscape

Currently, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture claims that the only legal way to sell red meat in the state of Vermont is by having the livestock slaughtered in an inspected facility. Rural Vermont has been working to allow farmers and their customers to arrange for the sale of the livestock while it is alive and agree to have it slaughtered on the farm for the customer's use. A bill allowing this was passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor in May 2008; however, the legislature included a delayed effective date for the bill, so that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) could review the bill and render an opinion as to whether or not it complies with federal law. If the bill is approved by the USDA, it will go into effect on April 15, 2009.

What is an Inspected Facility?

An inspected facility is a building where livestock is killed in the presence of an inspector. The facility must meet certain standards and follow certain procedures. If livestock is processed in an inspected facility, it may be sold from the farm, at farmers' markets, to restaurants and retail establishments, and it may be sold in pieces, such as ground meat, steaks, tenderloin, etc. It must be properly labeled to be sold in this way.



What Would the Farm Fresh Meat Bill Do?

The Farm Fresh Meat Bill states simply, "An itinerant custom slaughterer may slaughter livestock owned by an individual who has entered into a contract with a person to raise the livestock on the farm where it is intended to be slaughtered."

This means:

- Farmers could sell live animals to customers (whole animals, or halves)
- The customer could sign a contract, hiring the farmer to raise the livestock and then have it slaughtered on the farm.
- The farmer would be responsible for raising the livestock and arranging the slaughter.
- The carcass could be transported by the customer, the farmer, or the itinerant slaughterer to a meat cutter, where the carcass could be cut up to the customer's specifications
- The meat could not be resold.



What is an Itinerant Slaughterer?

The definition of an itinerant slaughterer in Vermont state law is a person "who slaughter[s] solely at a person's home or farm and who does not own, operate or work at a slaughtering plant."

Why Do We Think the USDA Should Approve the Bill?

Under both federal and state law, on-farm slaughter is allowed when people are slaughtering animals of their own raising. We believe that customers should be allowed to contract with farmers to raise their animals if they prefer to have meat from animals that were slaughtered on the farm.