

Selling Poultry in Vermont

What the "Chicken Bill" Means for You

The Agricultural Viability Act of 2007, nicknamed the "Chicken Bill," was enacted on May 21, 2007. This law made it legal for Vermont farmers raising fewer than 1000 birds/year to process poultry on the farm and sell birds at farmers' markets and to restaurants, as well as at the farm. The law includes all poultry (chicken, turkey, ducks, etc). The birds must be sold whole, and if sold at the markets or to restaurants, have proper labeling. If poultry is sold as cuts (drumsticks, wings, etc), or if it is sold anywhere else, the poultry must be processed in an inspected facility.

What is an Inspected Facility?

An inspected facility is a building where poultry is killed and processed in the presence of a person who is responsible for inspecting each bird before it is killed and overseeing the processing of the birds. The facility must meet certain standards and follow certain procedures. If poultry 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 drumsticks, breasts, or wings. It must be properly labeled to be sold in this way.



What is "Uninspected Poultry"?

Uninspected poultry is poultry that has been killed and processed on the farm without an inspector present. The farm may or not have a building for the purpose. Sometimes, an itinerant (traveling) poultry processor will come with a truck, or with portable equipment, and sometimes the farmer will do the work him/herself.



When Can a Farmer Sell Uninspected Poultry?

A farm can sell poultry that has been killed on the farm if:

- the farm slaughters fewer than 1000 birds annually, AND
- no birds are offered for sale or transportation across state lines, AND
- the farmer sells only birds raised on his/her own farm, AND
- the poultry products are sold as whole birds only, from the farm, at a farmers' market, or to a food restaurant licensed by the commissioner of health.

When selling uninspected poultry, farms must also follow a few other rules:

- If the birds are sold at a farmers' market or to a restaurant, they must be labeled properly.
- If birds are sold to a restaurant, the farmer must obtain a signed statement from the restaurant, indicating that the restaurant is aware that the poultry is uninspected and that there are menu labeling requirements. The farmer must keep a copy of this statement, leave one with the restaurant, and send one to the department of health.
- Farm-processed poultry must be kept separate from any other products being sold (in a separate cooler at the farmers' market, in a separate freezer on the farm, on a separate shelf in the cooler at a restaurant).
- Poultry should be kept at 40° F or lower at all times until it is sold.
- Farmers do not need to register their labels with the Agency of Agriculture; however, the Agency will review labels upon request for compliance with requirements. The Agency may inspect labels at farmers' markets or at restaurants, and if labels are not correct, they can fine the farmer up to \$1000/violation/day, with a maximum fine of \$25,000.
- The Agency of Agriculture can also inspect a farm to ensure that it is not exceeding the 1000 birds/year limit. The farmer's best practice is to keep accurate records of how many birds have been slaughtered on the farm.



Sample labels can be seen on the back of this fact sheet.

For more information, please contact:



Rural Vermont
15 Barre Street, Ste. 2
Montpelier, VT 05602
802-223-7222
www.ruralvermont.org



Sample Label for Poultry Sold at a FARMERS' MARKET:

Rural Vermont Farm
Joe Farmer
15 Barre Street, Ste 2
Montpelier, VT 05602
802-223-7222
www.ruralvermont.org

CHICKEN
Price Per Pound: _____
Net Weight: _____
Total Cost: _____

Exempt per 6 V.S.A §3312(b): NOT INSPECTED

SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS:
Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave. Keep raw poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces, including cutting boards, utensils, and hands after touching raw poultry. Cook thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit maintained for at least 15 seconds. Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.

Sample Label for Poultry Sold to a RESTAURANT:

Rural Vermont Farm
Joe Farmer
15 Barre Street, Ste 2
Montpelier, VT 05602
802-223-7222
www.ruralvermont.org

CHICKEN
Price per Pound: _____
Net Weight: _____
Total Price: _____

Exempt per 6 V.S.A §3312(b): NOT INSPECTED

SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS:
Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave. Keep raw poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces, including cutting boards, utensils, and hands after touching raw poultry. Cook thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit maintained for at least 15 seconds. Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.

Any menu item that includes this poultry must clearly state that the poultry is from Rural Vermont Farm and must prominently display the words “poultry processed on the farm and not inspected” on the menu in proximity to the menu item.