



The On-farm Slaughter of Small Quantities of On-farm Reared Poultry

Introduction

Small scale poultry production at the on-farm level has a long history in Ireland, particularly the rearing of small flocks of turkeys and geese for seasonal markets such as the Christmas market.

The purpose of this factsheet is to outline what you have to do to comply with the law if you are slaughtering small quantities of poultry on the farm.

Producing poultry meat for sale is a serious undertaking with significant legal obligations. As a food business operator, you are legally responsible for producing food that is safe. This requires significant ongoing commitment to high levels of hygiene and food safety.

There is a comprehensive legislation section on the website of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), www.fsai.ie, where more in depth information on food legislation and its requirements, can be found.

The FSAI publication *Guide to Food Law for Artisan/Small Food Producers Starting a New Business* contains simplified summaries of food legislation. This publication is available on the FSAI website at www.fsai.ie, or in hard copy by calling the Advice Line on 1890 33 66 77.

This factsheet should be read in conjunction with the above material.

Registration

If you rear poultry you must register with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF). It is important for DAFF to have details of all poultry flocks for animal health reasons (e.g. in the case of an outbreak of infectious disease in poultry such as highly pathogenic avian influenza; the so-called 'bird-flu').

Contact details for DAFF are on page 6 of this document.

If you are rearing poultry on your farm, slaughtering them on your farm and using them solely for your own consumption, you are not regarded as a food business operator. Registering your poultry rearing activity with DAFF is sufficient.

The slaughter and sale or supply of slaughtered poultry means that you are a food business operator. As well as the need to register your poultry rearing activity with DAFF, you must also make an additional notification to register as a food business operator. You can do this by contacting a veterinary officer in your relevant local authority area. Contact details for your local authority are detailed on page 6 of this document.

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It is an offence to mislead the authorities regarding the nature of your business, for example, to claim that you are slaughtering poultry for your own personal consumption if, in reality, you are selling or supplying them to consumers or retailers. Such offences are a breach of food legislation and you may be liable to prosecution.

Registration with Your Local Authority

NOTE: It is important to note that failing to register your on-farm poultry slaughter business with the relevant local authority is an offence.

Registration is a relatively simple but formal process. At a minimum, you will be required to let the local authority know who you are, where you are located and what activities you are involved in, together with any other information the local authority may require.

For example, the local authority may also require you to give notice to the supervising veterinary officer as to when activities are being carried out in an establishment, particularly in the case of disjointed or seasonal slaughter, or when the timing of slaughter is not regular.

Also as your business evolves/changes, you are required to let the local authority know. Changes could include, for example, increasing throughput or changing location/type of operations.

Generally, poultry slaughtering operations on farm which fit the criteria outlined in the bullet points below, will require registration:

- Poultry are being slaughtered and sold/supplied/placed on the market
- No more than 10,000 poultry a year are being slaughtered on farm (with a maximum of 1,000 in any given week)
- Poultry are supplied or are offered for sale within a 100km radius of the farm
- Poultry are supplied:
 - Directly to the final consumer (e.g. at the farm gate)
 - Via a local retail establishment. This means, for example, at a local retail butcher; via a local restaurant; a stall at a farmers market, etc (this is not an exhaustive list)

NOTE: Poultry must be slaughtered **at a suitable establishment** on the holding where they are grown and finished (but not necessarily hatched), where that holding is a primary production holding (a farm).

If the activities of your businesses do not fit into the restrictions outlined above, registration will not be enough and your food business will need approval from the local authority. Approval is a more formal and detailed process than registration, and compliance with additional food legislation would be required. Activities that would require approval include any of the following:

- Slaughtering more poultry than the quantities given above
- Supplying poultry other than as described above
- Slaughtering poultry from other farms/flock owners, e.g. buying a batch of finished poultry from another farmer, slaughtering them on your own farm and placing this poultry on the market
- Slaughtering finished poultry on behalf of somebody else

The local authority veterinary officer will be able to advise on the exact scope of activities that may be permitted in a registered on-farm poultry slaughterhouse.

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Relevant Legislation for Registered On-farm Poultry Slaughterhouses

Food law that applies to your business is a combination of both European Union legislation and Irish legislation.

Food safety and compliance with food legislation and other legislation is your responsibility. The local authority veterinary officer will carry out inspections/audits to verify that you are complying with the relevant legislation.

The following is a summary of the main requirements of food and related legislation that apply to your business.

It is not an exhaustive list. There may be other pieces of legislation which may apply to your food business. You are advised to consult the food legislation section of the FSAI's website, the FSAI Advice Line, or your enforcement officer, for further information.

Animal Welfare

The welfare of animals on your farm is your responsibility.

The welfare of animals at the time of slaughter is of particular relevance if you are slaughtering poultry on-farm. Compliance with the legislation is important and the local authority veterinary officer will verify this.

- The underlying principle of welfare legislation as it applies to slaughter is that unnecessary pain, suffering or injury must not be inflicted on poultry at the time around slaughter. Hence, care must be taken at all times around the time of slaughter to avoid avoidable pain, suffering or injury. This includes careful handling at the time of collection for slaughter such that the welfare of the poultry is not compromised.
- **At the time of slaughter you must restrain, stun and bleed each bird effectively in appropriate facilities.**

Food Business Operator Responsibility

As a food business operator **you must not place unsafe or unfit food on the market.**

Traceability

You must be able to trace food one step forward to your customer and one step back to your supplier in the supply chain, and keep appropriate records of this. At a minimum, records and details of the following should be kept:

- Poultry in:
 - Dates
 - Quantities
 - From which hatchery/source for birds
- Poultry out, i.e. dispatched from slaughterhouses:
 - Dates
 - Amounts
 - People supplied (other than final consumer)
 - Names and addresses

Having a traceability system in place means that as a food business operator, you are in a position to effectively recall unsafe food from the market.

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Food Safety Management

As a food business operator **you are responsible for food safety in your business**. Food safety hazards associated with your business activity must be managed by using a food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP (**HACCP** stands for Hazard **A**nalysis and **C**ritical **C**ontrol **P**oint. It is a tool used by food businesses to identify and control food safety hazards in their operations).

Before implementing HACCP -based procedures, you should have in place basic good hygiene conditions and practices called **prerequisites**. Prerequisites are designed to control hazards in a general way and could include the following:

- Cleaning and disinfection/sanitation
- Maintenance of equipment and buildings
- Personnel hygiene and training
- Pest control
- Suitable plant and equipment
- Suitable premises and structure
- Services (such as water)
- Storage, distribution and transport
- Waste and animal by-products management
- Zoning (physical separation of activities to prevent potential food contamination)

Labelling

Poultry produced on your farm must be labelled correctly (clear, accurate, must not mislead, legible, etc.)

For pre-packaged poultry (e.g. in a sealed bag/container) the label needs to state:

- The name of the food business operator
- The address of the farm on which the poultry were reared and slaughtered
- The name of the poultry product
- The date of minimum durability: In the case of poultry, this will be a 'use-by' date and **not** a 'best-before' date (e.g. use-by XX December 20XX)
- Storage instructions: Poultry should be stored below 4 °C and the label should indicate this
- Weight of the poultry in kilogrammes
- Cooking instructions

Loose sales: In certain circumstances poultry may be sold loose, e.g. farm gate sales. In such circumstances, placing a sign on or near the poultry indicating the name of the poultry is sufficient. However, it is important to note that a label which would normally be applied to pre-packaged poultry could also be used for loose sales, and would fulfil legal requirements.

Animal By-products

Not all parts of the live fowl are used as food. For example, about 35% of broiler live weight consists of feathers, blood, viscera, feet, head and trim (known as animal by-products). These must be stored away from any food and disposed of correctly, most commonly in a rendering plant that is approved by DAFF. More information about animal by-products can be found on the DAFF website: www.agriculture.gov.ie

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Microbiological Sampling/Other Sampling

Among other requirements, there is a general requirement for broiler and turkey flocks to be tested for *Salmonella* on-farm before slaughter. However, if you are slaughtering your own poultry on-farm in your registered poultry slaughterhouse, this is not currently a requirement. Microbiological testing of carcasses themselves is a general requirement of food legislation but an exemption may be possible based on a risk assessment by the local authority veterinary officer.

Legislation Applicable to the On-farm Slaughter of Poultry

This is not an exhaustive list. There may be other pieces of legislation which may apply to your food business. It is advisable to consult the food legislation section of the FSAI's website, the FSAI Advice Line, or your enforcement officer, for further information.

Food Hygiene Legislation

Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety

Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs

S.I. No. 432/2009 – European Communities (Food and Feed Hygiene) Regulations, 2009

Labelling

Council Directive 2000/13/EC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs

S.I. No. 432/2002 – European Communities (labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs) Regulations, 2002

Microbiological criteria

Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs

Welfare

S.I. No. 311/2010 – European Communities (Welfare of farmed animals) Regulations, 2010

Animal by-products

Commission Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002

S.I. No. 252/2008 – European Communities (Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies and Animal By-Products) Regulations, 2008

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Useful Contacts

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

Website: www.fsai.ie
Advice Line: 1890 336677

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Website: www.agriculture.gov.ie (general)
www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/poultry/ (poultry section)
Tel: 016072000
Lo Call: 1890 200510

Local Authorities

A list of local authorities is available at this link:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration/LocalAuthorities/>

Contact details for your local authority are also available from the FSAI Advice Line **1890 336677**.

Further Information

FSAI publications: Available at: http://www.fsai.ie/resources_publications.html

All our publications are free to download and most can be obtained in hard copy free of charge from our advice line 1890 33 66 77 or by emailing info@fsai.ie.

Humane Slaughter Association:

Humane Slaughter Association,
The Old School,
Brewhouse Hill,
Wheathampstead,
Herts, AL4 8AN,
UK
Tel: +44 (0)1582 831919
Website: www.hsa.org.uk

Practical Slaughter of Poultry – A guide for the small producer 2nd edition HSA & CJA 2001.
ISBN 1871 561 16 7 – from the Humane Slaughter Association