

Under 1K Poultry Exempt Guidance

The intent of the Under 1K poultry exemption is to provide a means for a small poultry producer to process whole birds on their farm for local distribution. It is the goal of Quality Assurance and Regulations (QAR) to provide support and education to these small poultry producers that will encourage good sanitary practices on the farm and a supply of wholesome, locally grown whole birds to the consumer.

General Requirements for Under 1K Poultry Exempt Operators

- Poultry must be raised, slaughtered and processed on property legally owned or leased by the Under 1K operator.
- Under 1K operators must register with MMPI/QA&R annually.
- Under 1K operators must allow inspection on the premises for periodic reviews and education.
- Under 1K operators must maintain records of poultry raised and processed.
- Under 1K operators must process less than 1000 poultry in one calendar year.
- Under 1K operators must assign a lot number to all birds sold and maintain a record of signed lot numbers and the poultry carcasses' point of sale.
Poultry must be healthy upon slaughter. The slaughter and processing of dead, dying, or diseased poultry is prohibited.
- Poultry must be processed under sanitary conditions.
- Poultry carcasses must remain whole, not cut up into parts, sausage or other products.
- Poultry organs, including the heart, giblets and livers cannot be sold.
- Poultry must be packaged and labelled in accordance with statute. (see labelling section below)
- Poultry must be packaged and labelled before sold.
- Poultry must be held frozen or under refrigerated conditions until sold.

License and Registration:

DACF licensure is NOT required to raise, slaughter or sell poultry using the Under 1K Poultry exemption. However, **free annual registration with DACF is required**. CSAs, municipal or privately operated farmers' markets, local stores and/or restaurants may choose to require Under 1K poultry operators to maintain DACF licensure rather than DACF registration, at their discretion. Any poultry products found in commerce by DACF from processors who have failed to register with the department or have not obtained DACF licensure will be detained and destroyed, and those processors are liable for civil and/or criminal penalties.



3/6/26 MMPI

Poultry Health and Humane Handling:

Birds should be made to move around in pens and visually examined for health and condition before slaughter or crating. Birds put in crates for slaughter must be held in areas that provide adequate ventilation and protection on days with extreme temperatures. Establishments should follow Good Commercial Practices whenever possible to ensure the humane treatment of birds. See **Appendix A** for an example of a Good Commercial Practices program.

The slaughter or processing of dead, dying, or diseased poultry is prohibited. If live poultry are suspected to be affected by a zoonotic disease, producers must contact the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) Division of Animal and Plant Health immediately, and segregate and quarantine the poultry until they can be examined by DACF Division of Animal Health veterinarians. The operator must ensure poultry is free from medicated feed residues, medication, pesticides, and other residues before slaughter.

Establishment Grounds and Facilities:

Areas where poultry is slaughtered must be kept clean and well maintained to prevent insanitary conditions and contamination of products. This may include mowing the grass regularly, removing large debris or junk items that could attract and harbor pests, and situating slaughter and processing operations away from holding pens soiled with feces. Any pest control chemicals used in or around poultry slaughter and processing areas must be safe for use in a food processing environment and handled carefully to prevent contamination of food products and creation of insanitary conditions.

The area(s) used for poultry processing must be separated from any area(s) used for holding live animals or poultry slaughter.

Lighting in areas where poultry carcasses are processed and where equipment is cleaned and sanitized must be sufficient to allow the processor to visually inspect carcasses and equipment for sanitary condition. Ventilation must be adequate to control odors, vapors, and condensation to the extent necessary to prevent product adulteration.

A clean supply of running water is required during operations in order to maintain sanitary conditions. If using a private well, the seasonal processor must test their water for coliforms, E. coli and nitrites before starting operations for the year. A processor that operates year-round must perform a second water test during the same calendar year. Any processor using municipal water should have the town's water report on hand for inspection instead (you can ask at the town office for a copy or get the water report off the town's website). Warm or hot water are much more effective than cold water to clean equipment and facilities and is recommended.

Utensils and Work Surfaces:

All utensils and work surfaces must be smooth and easily cleanable. Any utensils or surfaces with visible rust must be treated to remove the rust or be discarded. Avoid wood surfaces and utensils as wood is porous and susceptible to absorbing water and fostering bacterial growth, even when painted or treated with polyurethane. Plastic pails, tubs and surfaces must be inspected for signs of wear; cracks, chipping, fraying and general roughness provide harborage sites for pathogenic bacteria and dirt. Damaged utensils and surfaces that cannot be adequately cleaned and sanitized must be discarded. Machinery used in processing operations must be able to be disassembled for inspection, cleaning, and sanitizing. Grouted tile work surfaces should be avoided due to the difficulty of completely cleaning grout. We recommend that hoses used for rinsing birds and filling ice tanks be food grade or drinking water quality (look for Recreational Vehicle approved) to prevent chemical contamination of carcasses.

Cleaning and sanitizing:

All food-contact and non-food-contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions. A general dish detergent can be used for cleaning surfaces and utensils. Hot water is necessary to adequately rinse away detergents and food soils and hot water that is 110°F or higher is necessary to remove fats and proteins.

Sanitization of work surfaces and utensils can be accomplished using one capful of Germicidal Bleach (not laundry bleach) in one gallon of water. Germicidal bleach that is specific for food contact surfaces is readily available at hardware stores or restaurant supply stores. When using “concentrated” germicidal bleach, the dilution recipe is 1 capful of bleach into two gallons of water. Contact time of at least one minute is needed for a germicidal bleach sanitizing solution to kill bacteria on a clean surface. Bleach solutions must reach a concentration of at least 200 ppm of chlorine to be effective, and solutions must be tested before use and during operations as needed with test strips to ensure chlorine is > 200 ppm, since organic material will deactivate the chlorine solution as it accumulates in the sanitizing solution. Test strips are readily available at Walmart and online. Scalders must be filled with clean water at the beginning of operations and the scalding water replenished/replaced as feathers and other organic debris collect in the water.

Other sanitizers besides bleach solutions may also be used. A list of approved sanitizers can be found on the QAR website. These sanitizers must be used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Sanitization of utensils can be accomplished without a chemical sanitizer if they are immersed for at least 30 seconds in clean, hot water at a temperature greater than 180°F.

All people processing birds must remove all jewelry except plain wedding bands, cover or restrain any long hair, and change garments as frequently as needed to prevent contamination of product. Restrooms must be available to all workers, and soap, water and towels provided for handwashing after use of the toilets. Beard nets and gloves are recommended when available.

Chilling:

Chilling the birds quickly to 40°F or below will help reduce growth of Salmonella, E. coli and other pathogens that will sicken consumers. The longer the internal temperature of the bird remains above 40°F, the greater the opportunity for these pathogenic bacteria to grow. Cold tap water alone will not chill poultry carcasses to 40°F or below. Consideration should be given to how chilling of the carcasses will be accomplished, whether by packing in ice, ice slurry or chilling in a freezer. Placing poultry carcasses in a residential refrigerator will NOT result in rapid chilling, as hot poultry carcasses chilled in residential refrigerators may take more than 24 hours to reach temperatures below 40°F. A freezer holding a small number of birds with air space between carcasses will chill the carcasses faster than a freezer stuffed with many birds touching one another. During initial operations we recommend inserting a meat thermometer into your largest carcass to monitor the amount of time it takes for that carcass to reach less than 40°F, and to consider how you can alter and speed up your chilling process if chilling is happening too slowly.

If using **ice chilling**, carcasses must be chilled to less than 40°F as follows:

Carcasses less than 4 pounds: within 4 hours

Carcasses between 4 and 8 pounds.: within 6 hours

Carcasses above 8 pounds: within 8 hours

Carcasses that are **air chilled** must be chilled to less than 40°F **within 12 hours.**

Under 1K Poultry products may only be distributed as follows:

Direct sales to customers from the Under 1K operator's farm.

Direct sales to customers with delivery to the customer's home by the Under 1K operator.

Direct sales to customers at farmers' markets.

Wholesaled to locally owned stores and restaurants.

Wholesaled to a Community Supported Agriculture organization (CSA) whose members have a direct marketing relationship with the Under 1K operator.

****No sales outside of the state of Maine or to large/chain stores and/or restaurants.****

Under 1K poultry exempt labels must bear the following information:

1. The farm's name
2. The Under 1K owner/producer's name
3. The physical address of the farm, including the zip code
4. The following disclosure statement: *"Exempt under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 2517-C NOT INSPECTED"*
5. Written safe handling and cooking instructions, using the following wording:
"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.”

6. The Under 1K poultry exempt operator’s registration number, which is issued to the Under 1K poultry exempt operator by QAR after registration.
7. A lot number, which is assigned to all birds sold. The Under 1K operator must maintain a record of signed lot numbers and point of sale for all poultry.

Bleeding, defeathering and evisceration (removal of internal organs):

Operations planning on bleeding, defeathering and eviscerating birds **outdoors** should use all means necessary to prevent pest attraction and bacterial contamination. Specifically consider:

Does the area have adequate drainage? Clay soil will not allow moisture to drain quickly, and may result in standing water in the area, which will attract pests as well as create an environment for bacteria and mold growth. Consider the crops that are grown nearby. Runoff from the slaughter area to gardens may result in bacterial contamination of produce.

Outdoor processing areas must be protected from flying pests using temporary or permanent physical walls, screened tents, or fans to prevent flies from being able to land on carcasses.

Blood, feathers and offal (guts), including the head and feet should be disposed of in a manner that prevents contamination of the carcasses and does not attract pests. These inedible materials cannot be stored in the same cooler or freezer with edible products.

Feathers, blood and feces are the largest contributors to bacterial contamination of products and the environment. **Bleeding and defeathering of carcasses must be conducted separately from evisceration.** Evisceration should be performed indoors if possible. When eviscerating the bird, care should be taken to prevent fecal matter and intestinal contents (ingesta) from coming in contact with carcasses, work surfaces and utensils.

Consideration should be given to how you will remove fecal matter or ingesta from carcasses, surfaces and utensils in the case of a gut puncture **before** starting operations. Water or diluted bleach solutions can be used to wash off poultry carcasses, work surfaces and utensils can be cleaned with water and sanitizing solutions, and handwashing stations are recommended for personnel cleanup after gut punctures.

All organs must be examined by the processor before disposal, and any organs or carcasses showing signs of disease must be discarded. The head, feet, and all organs must be removed from all carcasses and cannot be sold. Any birds that have been over-scalded (meat appears “cooked”) must be discarded.

All ice manufacturing equipment must be maintained in a sanitary condition and only use potable water for ice production, and all packaging used to store product must be certified as food grade.

Birds that have not yet received their final wash and inspection should not be placed together in chilling tanks, as contaminants from a single bird may be spread to the other birds in a water tank. Care should be taken to move each bird to the final rinse and inspection area in a way that prevents cross-contamination between birds.

Final Rinse, Final Inspection and Storage:

Receptacles used to store edible products must be conspicuously marked (by color or labelled in some recognizable way) and not used to hold inedible materials or offal. Final rinsing and inspection of the bird should be conducted indoors, where the operation can be protected from flies and other environmental contaminants. Each bird should be carefully inspected for any contaminants such as feathers, feces, ingesta and blood. Each bird should be rinsed thoroughly before put into ice water tanks or air chiller. The designated area for inspection and rinsing must have adequate lighting for inspection of carcasses, and be free of contamination from the environment, pests, mold and bacteria, as well as foreign materials such as metal, glass, plastic and wood.

After chilling the birds to 40°F or below, the birds should be removed from the chilling medium and allowed to drain. Bags being used to package the birds should have the labels applied prior to stuffing as it is often difficult to label the bag once the bird has been placed inside, due to the shape and/or moisture. The label must bear all required information (see page 4).

Birds should be at 40°F or below before sold to customers and maintained at or below 40°F during storage, distribution and/or during mobile vending markets. The whole birds should be sold or frozen within 7 days of slaughter and processing.

Note:

When planning where poultry will be slaughtered and processed, consideration should be given to the future. If you believe there is a possibility you may grow your operation to more than 1000 birds, or you want to be able to cut up and/or further process your poultry in the future, decisions regarding materials, design and structure(s) should be made with the requirements of the QAR Commercial Kitchen License in mind. Please contact QAR at (207) 287-3841 if you would like more information about the requirements for QAR licensure.

Appendix A: Good Commercial Practices for Humane Handling of Poultry

Adapted from California Department of Food and Agriculture

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/mpes/pdfs/GoodComercialPracticesHumaneHandlingPoultry.pdf>

Abuse of any birds during catching, holding shackling, slaughtering is not permitted. Conditions that put broilers in immediate danger are referred to as acts of intentional and egregious animal abuse.

These include but are not limited to:

- Poking a stick, prod, or other object into a sensitive part of the bird such as the eye, nostril, mouth, ear, or cloaca.
- Cutting off limbs, wings, skinning, or cutting into any bird that shows any sign of sensibility (consciousness), except for religiously approved practices (i.e. Kosher or Halal slaughter).
- Malicious use of equipment that results in breaking a bone, suffocation, or death of bird(s).
- Dragging, hitting, kicking, or throwing a bird with the intention of causing injury.
- Striking a bird(s) with any type of object with the intention of causing injury.

1.0 HANDLING OF LIVE BIRDS

1.0.1 All poultry operations should have a written training program for bird catching, holding, handling, shackling, slaughtering and euthanasia.

1.0.2 Birds in coops must be gently removed.

1.0.3 Broilers must be caught by their LEGS as this is standard catching procedure.

1.0.4 Birds must not be caught or carried by one leg.

1.0.5 Birds must never be lifted, carried, or drug by the wing or neck and never be thrown.

1.0.6 Birds in holding crates must be gently removed. Birds must never be removed / lifted by the wings

1.0.7 The Holding area should be covered and equipped with fans (and misters if necessary) or heaters to ensure proper cooling/warming of birds.

1.0.8 Holding cages should be appropriately sized and in good repair so that no birds can be injured or escape. Cage damage, including large holes, broken or missing doors, or broken (not bent) wires is cause to repair or discard the crate.

1.0.9 Holding cages should permit the birds to sit without being on top of one another (can rest in a single layer).

2.0 SLAUGHTER

2.0.1 Birds must be handled as little as possible up to the point of slaughter

2.0.2 Holding crates should be as close as possible to the cones or shackles to lessen the time of handling of the birds.

2.0.3 Birds must be slaughtered within a reasonable amount of time, normally within two hours of crating.

2.0.4 Inversion and suspension of birds must be minimized.

2.0.5 No bird should be inverted or suspended in such a manner as to cause it avoidable pain or suffering.

2.0.6 Birds must not be inverted and placed in cones or on shackles unless personnel mean to slaughter them immediately.

- 2.0.7 If birds are placed in cones, they must be the correct size for the type of bird.
- 2.0.8 Chickens and ducks must not be inverted for more than 60 seconds before being stunned or killed.
- 2.0.9 Turkeys and geese must not be inverted for more than 120 seconds before being stunned or killed.
- 2.0.10 Cutting, bleeding or dressing any sensible bird is not allowed.

3.1 SHACKLES

- 3.1.1 If shackles are used, they must be the correct size and width for the birds.
- 3.1.2 If shackles are used, birds must be hung by both legs.
- 3.1.3 The shackle must be designed and positioned in such a way that the bird suspended on it is clear of any obstruction – including when its wings are outstretched.
- 3.1.4 From the time of shackling to the time of stunning there should be no unnecessary noises that can cause unnecessary disturbance to the birds.
- 3.1.5 Shackles must be cleaned and maintained according to manufacturer’s specification. Note: Rust on shackles may prevent effective electric stunning.

4.0 STUNNING

- 4.0.1 Stunning must render birds immediately insensible to pain on the first attempt.
- 4.0.2 All birds must be rendered insensible to pain (stunned) prior to being cut.
- 4.0.3 Stunning must ensure birds remain insensible to pain until the bird dies due to slaughter or blood loss.
- 4.0.4 If any sign of sensibility is observed at any time after stunning, the bird must be re-stunned immediately.
- 4.0.5 Equipment used to shackle, stun, bleed and kill a bird must be kept and maintained in line with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- 4.0.6 Equipment used to shackle, stun, bleed and kill a bird must only be used within the design parameters described by the manufacturer.
- 4.0.7 For all stunning equipment there should be reserve equipment for use in case of emergency or breakdown; or there must be a protocol to stop slaughtering and remove any live birds from shackles or cones.
- 4.0.8 Staff that carry out stunning and bleeding must be trained to use the available equipment.

5.0 STAFF AND TRAINING

- 5.0.1 There should be a named individual responsible for bird welfare within the facility that has the authority to act should any welfare issues arise.
- 5.0.2 Training in humane methods of poultry handling should be made available to all staff working with live birds.
- 5.0.3 Staff should be trained to recognize signs of effective and ineffective stunning and signs of recovery of consciousness.
- 5.0.4 There should be clearly written standard operating procedures for every step of the operation and staff responsible for animal handling, stunning and slaughter are to be familiar with these procedures.