

# Iowa Poultry Slaughter, Processing and Sales Guidelines for Small-Scale Producers

This publication is designed to help small-scale poultry producers in Iowa navigate poultry slaughter and processing regulations and their associated marketing limitations.

Producers can use the link on page 4 to locate a nearby poultry processing facility that operates under the desired type of inspection and can accommodate small batches of birds. Additional resources, including licensing requirements for Iowa egg producers, also are provided on page 4.

Please note that this information is subject to legislative and regulatory change, and that processing plants can come and go just like any other business.

Use the contact information provided to get the most up-to-date information.



Summary of inspection types and limitations in the state of Iowa							
Criteria	USDA Inspected	State of Iowa Inspected	Custom Exemption	1,000 Bird Producer/Grower Exemption	20,000 Bird Producer/Grower Exemption	Producer/Grower or Other Person Exemption	Small Enterprise Exemption
Slaughter limit	No limit	No limit	No limit	Yes; 1,000 per calendar year	Yes; 20,000 per calendar year	Yes; 20,000 per calendar year	Yes; 20,000 per calendar year
Further processing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Whole and cut up poultry only
Sell to home consumer	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sell at farmers market	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sell to any HRI*	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Not to all HRIs**	Yes
Sell to distributor	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Sell to retail store	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Interstate sale	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

\*HRI = Hotels, restaurants, and institutions

\*\* Product produced under the producer/grower or other person exemption may not be sold to institutions.

## Official inspected slaughter versus exempt slaughter

The inspection status of a poultry slaughter establishment determines where the poultry products can be distributed and sold (see chart on page 1).

United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA FSIS) official inspected poultry plant: When a bird is slaughtered at a USDA FSIS official inspected slaughter plant, it is inspected, bears the federal mark of inspection, and can be sold across state lines (interstate commerce) as well as within the state (intrastate commerce). Regulatory requirements for operating this type of plant include: ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of all birds by a federal meat inspector, daily inspection, carcass chilling standards, approved facilities, HACCP1 plan, SSOPs<sup>2</sup>, approved labeling, potable water certification, wastewater disposal certificate, and records of business transactions, food safety, and sanitation programs.

Poultry slaughtered in an official inspected federal plant can be sold to consumers, restaurants, institutions, or retail outlets.

**State of Iowa official inspected poultry plant:** When a bird is slaughtered in an Iowa official inspected facility, it is *inspected*, bears the State of Iowa mark of inspection, and can be sold only within the state. Regulatory requirements include: ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of all birds by a state meat inspector, daily inspection, carcass chilling standards, approved facilities, HACCP plans, SSOPs, approved labeling, potable water certification, wastewater disposal certificate, and records of business transactions, food safety, and sanitation programs.

Poultry slaughtered in an official state plant can be sold to consumers, restaurants, institutions, or retail outlets within the state of Iowa.

**Custom exempt:** When a bird is slaughtered at a facility operating under a custom exemption (often called a “custom plant”), the bird is not inspected, it is void of any marks of inspection, and *is for the exclusive household use of the owner and members of the household, nonpaying guests, and employees*. Regulatory requirements include: approved facilities, SSOP, approved labeling, potable water certification, wastewater disposal certificate, and records of business transactions, food safety, and sanitation programs.

<sup>1</sup>A Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan includes a written document that outlines the manufacturing processes in a plant and the recordkeeping used to monitor critical control points for food safety hazards.

<sup>2</sup>Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) are documented procedures as to how a plant cleans (sanitizes) all processing areas, such as equipment and surfaces.

These plants are inspected at least quarterly on a risk-based system by state inspection staff to ensure regulatory requirements are met. Poultry slaughtered in a custom-exempt poultry slaughter plant **cannot** be sold.

**Other exemptions:** If a licensed processor is operating under one of the other poultry exemptions, the poultry is not inspected, it is void of any marks of inspection, but may be sold into certain markets permitted by that specific exemption. Regulatory requirements include: approved facilities, SSOP, approved labeling, potable water certification, wastewater disposal certificate, and records.

There are three other exemptions that will allow for a licensed facility to handle no more than 20,000 birds per calendar year.

1. **Producer/grower exemption**
2. **Producer/grower or other person exemption**
3. **Small enterprise exemption**

The producer/grower exemption and the producer/grower or other person exemption permit slaughter and processing, while the small enterprise exemption permits only slaughter and cutting up. Sales of these exempt birds are limited by each exemption and are allowed only within the state of Iowa. Regulatory requirements include: approved facilities, SSOP, approved labeling, potable water certification, wastewater disposal certificate, and records.

More information on the regulatory agency in charge of each type of plant is available on page 3.

**1,000-bird exemption:** The 1,000-bird limit is only for birds raised, slaughtered, and sold on a producer’s farm and are for sale only to household consumers. If choosing this exemption, complete and accurate records of birds processed in a calendar year must be maintained, including customers’ names and dates. Poultry processed under this exemption cannot be sold to restaurants, institutions, or retail outlets (including farmers markets).

## Slaughter options for selling live birds

- A producer can sell live birds to an individual. The buyer can process them for personal use and they are not for sale after processing.
- The buyer can have the birds processed at a custom-exempt or official facility.
- The seller can arrange drop off and pick up at the processing plant, and the buyer (or a representative) must pay the processor directly.

## Poultry seller licensing information

There are four possible licenses a poultry seller may need from the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Food and Consumer Safety Bureau.

The table assumes that you are selling inspected or exempt poultry that can legally be sold to the types of customers listed in the table. Check table or contact the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau if you are unsure.

1. *Farmers Market License* or
2. *Mobile Food Unit License*: Needed to sell any product at any farmers market in Iowa.
3. *Retail Food Establishment License*: Needed if the producer has a retail stand or store at the farm, residence, or elsewhere. This license is not needed if the producer direct-markets meat and/or poultry only from a processing plant licensed by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Meat and Poultry Bureau.
4. *Warehouse License*: Needed if producer will be storing processed poultry at their residence for distribution to consumers, retailers, food service or other non-household buyers such as at a farmers market. If the producer has a retail food establishment license for the same premises, they do **not** also need a warehouse license.

**Note:** If selling to a hotel, restaurant, institution (HRI) or retail store where the buyer picks up processed poultry from an approved processor directly, the producer does not need to have a warehouse license, as they are not warehousing the product.

Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals licenses	
If a producer wants to . . .	License needed
Sell poultry directly to home consumers (1,000-bird exemption)	No license needed
Sell poultry at a farmers market	Farmers Market License or Mobile Food Unit License
Sell poultry at their own retail store	Retail Food Establishment License
Sell and distribute poultry to retail stores and/or HRIs	Warehouse License*

\* A warehouse license is also needed if processed poultry is stored anywhere other than the licensed processing locker. For example: storing processed chickens in freezers on the farm so they can be taken and sold at a farmers market. A warehouse license is not needed if the seller has another licensed establishment on the premises (such as a retail food establishment).

## Resources and contacts

Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals  
Food and Consumer Safety Bureau  
321 East 12th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
515-281-7102  
[www.state.ia.us/government/dia](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dia)

### USDA guidance document

A detailed [USDA FSIS guidance document](#) explaining the requirements and limits of the specific poultry slaughter exemptions can be found at this website:  
[https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/0c410cbe-9f0c-4981-86a3-a0e3e3229959/Poultry\\_Slaughter\\_Exemption\\_0406.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/0c410cbe-9f0c-4981-86a3-a0e3e3229959/Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0406.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

### ATTRA

The National Center for Appropriate Technology's ATTRA Project has created a [comprehensive guide to small-scale poultry processing](#), both on-farm and in small plants:  
<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/poultryprocess.html>

### Iowa Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau

Poultry exemptions are written in technical form and may require interpretation. Questions can be directed to:

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
Iowa Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau  
515-281-3338  
[meatAndPoultry@iowaagriculture.gov](mailto:meatAndPoultry@iowaagriculture.gov)  
[www.iowaagriculture.gov/meatAndPoultryInspection.asp](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/meatAndPoultryInspection.asp)

### Iowa poultry processors

Access the most up-to-date [list of licensed Iowa poultry processors](#) on the website of the Iowa Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau, <http://idalsdata.org/IowaData/meatAndPoultry.cfm>.



## Iowa egg licensing guidelines

IDALS upholds the laws and regulations for shell eggs, enforcing quality, grade, size, labeling, refrigeration, brand registration, and payment of assessments. They monitor shell egg quality at production levels. IDALS' goal is to provide quality information while maintaining fair and equitable marketing standards in the egg industry.

IDALS partners with the United States Food and Drug Administration and the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to ensure that Iowa Shell Egg Standards are maintained.

### Who should register?

**21—36.2(196) Licensing.** An egg handler's license shall be obtained from the department for each location at which eggs will be candled and graded. In order to obtain an egg handler's license, the applicant shall comply with the standards contained in Iowa Code chapter 196.

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Egg Handler License Guidelines	
<i>If you want to . . .</i>	<i>License needed</i>
Sell eggs directly to home consumers	No IDALS license needed
Sell eggs at farmers market	No IDALS license needed
Sell eggs to retail store*	IDALS Egg Handlers License

\*including but not limited to bakery, restaurant, warehouse

### Resources and contacts

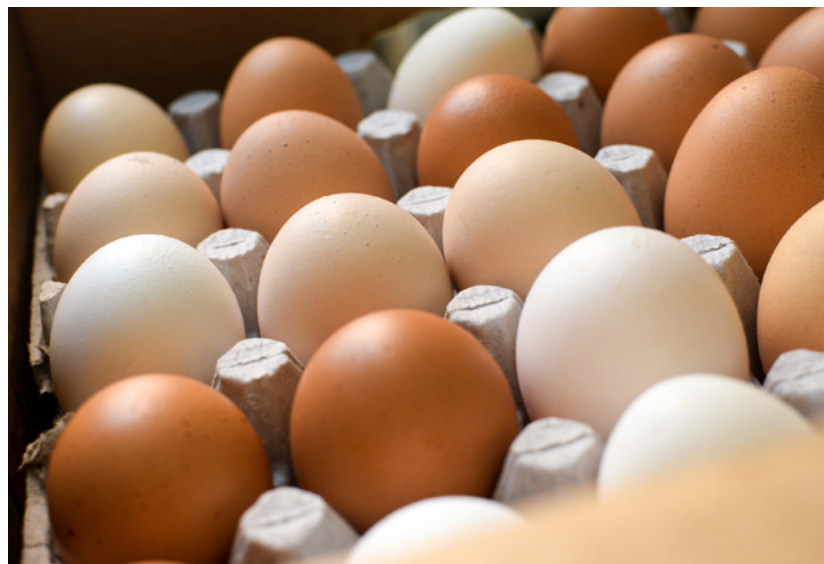
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
Feed and Fertilizer Bureau  
Wallace Building  
502 East 9th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
515-725-4111  
[feedAndFertilizer@iowaAgriculture.gov](mailto:feedAndFertilizer@iowaAgriculture.gov)

#### [Iowa Code requirements for egg handlers](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/iac/chapter/21.36.pdf)

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/iac/chapter/21.36.pdf>

#### [Iowa egg handlers application](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/feedAndFertilizer/pdfs/2017/ApplicationEggHandlerFORM.pdf)

<http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/feedAndFertilizer/pdfs/2017/ApplicationEggHandlerFORM.pdf>



### Food and Drug Administration Guidance

The Egg Rule requires shell egg producers with 3,000 or more laying hens at a particular farm that does not sell all eggs directly to consumers and that produces shell eggs for the table market to register as a shell egg producer.

#### [Guidance for Industry](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/Eggs/default.htm)

<https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/Eggs/default.htm>

### USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Guidance

#### [Shell Egg Surveillance](https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/eggs/complying)

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/eggs/complying>

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