

## **Meat Inspection in Yukon**

### **Meat Inspection**

Meat inspection is intended to ensure that inspected meat and meat products are free of visible evidence of disease or contamination that may be harmful to human health. Meat inspectors work with the industry to ensure wholesome, safe meat products. Their role supports food safety through complete inspection of animals before and during slaughter, and through working with abattoir operators to maintain high standards of cleaning and sanitation of the facility and training of personnel.

### **Regulatory Basis**

On June 10, 1988 the Yukon government, pursuant to subsection 24 of the *Agricultural Products Act*, established the “Meat Inspection and Abattoir Regulations”. O.I.C. 1988/104 provides the process and requirements to allow Yukon farmers access to retail markets within the territory. There is no provision of meat or meat products for export beyond territorial borders.

### **Meat Regulation and the Requirement for Inspection**

The *Agricultural Products Act* states under Section 19(1):

19(1) No person shall sell a regulated product or offer a regulated product for sale to any person unless the product has been approved by an inspector in accordance with regulations applying to that product.

Meat is a regulated product and, when offered for sale by the purchaser of the meat, inspection is required. This applies to retail sale in restaurants, grocery stores or by wholesalers.

In Yukon, meat that falls under the restrictions of 19(1):

- shall be slaughtered in a licenced abattoir, and
- shall be inspected by a qualified meat inspector pre and post mortem and judged by the inspector to be fit for human consumption.

There are currently two abattoirs licenced to provide inspected slaughter service to Yukon farmers. In addition, these facilities offer custom slaughter service for Farm Gate sales (farmer to customer for personal use). Meat that is for Farm Gate sale is not for retail sale.

The sale of regulated products provision of the *Agricultural Products Act* (Section 19(1)) has broad applicability to provide protection to producers, retailers and the general public.

### **Abattoir Operations**

Under the *Meat Inspection and Abattoir Regulations* a licenced abattoir must meet facility standards and slaughter process standards.

The facility standards (comprising suitable construction and hygiene protocol) are primarily overseen by an Environmental Health Officer, Health and Social Services.

Slaughter process standards are primarily overseen by the Agriculture Branch of Energy Mines and Resources in conjunction with the Animal Health Unit (Environment Yukon).

An abattoir licence is limited to animal types listed on the licence and only those species can be inspected at a given time.

If animals other than those listed on an abattoir licence are proposed for inspected slaughter, the slaughter protocol specific to each animal type must be in place and the licence amended by Agriculture Branch.

### **Provision of Inspection Services to Scheduled Slaughter**

Slaughter work in Yukon has traditionally been concentrated in the fall of the year when cooler temperatures aid in the preservation and aging of carcasses. The fall slaughter also provided the opportunity for farmers to maximize the growth of animals over the summer.

Qualified meat inspection service is provided to two facilities by Yukon Government. Meat inspectors are authorized under the *Agricultural Products Act* to perform the duties specified by the Meat Inspection and Abattoir Regulations.

Meat inspection is currently provided by a private sector contractor and a Yukon government employee. Meat inspection is a small part of their overall work.

Provision of inspection services were initially developed to meet the needs of the mobile abattoir (privately operated under YG contract since 2006).

The Farmer, the Service Provider (abattoir operator) and the Meat Inspector must coordinate scheduling for a retail slaughter to occur.

- 1) The Farmer contacts the Service Provider requesting the slaughter of animals on a specific date.
- 2) The Service Provider acknowledges the request and determines if their operation is available to undertake the work on the requested date.
- 3) The Service Provider advises the Farmer that prior to confirming the requested slaughter date the availability of an Inspector will be confirmed.
- 4) The Service Provider then finalizes a slaughter date with the Inspector.

As there are three players involved to make this work, flexibility is required to secure a date that works for all three. It is important that farmers and service providers plan ahead to determine slaughter dates as early as possible in order to establish slaughter dates with the meat inspector. Hiring of a dedicated meat inspector will reduce the scheduling complications for the participants and improve access to inspected slaughter for Yukon farmers. The Agriculture Branch has made a commitment to staff this new part-time position in the near future.

### **Use of Domestic Yukon Livestock for Non-Retail Events**

Inspected meat is required for public events even if there is no product sold.

For private events, the organizer should discuss with Environmental Health how the meat is being supplied to determine whether inspected meat is mandatory. Environmental Health can be reached at 867 667-xxxx. Working with regulators as early as possible to determine if inspection services are required will increase the likelihood of securing an acceptable slaughter date with the meat inspector.