

01-001 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY
DIVISION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REGULATIONS

Chapter 332: RABBIT PROCESSING

SUMMARY: The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the standards for licensing and regulations for rabbit processing. This chapter is specific for rabbit processing and Chapter 358, Rules for Manufacturing of Potentially Hazardous Foods, is also in effect for Rabbit Processing.

1. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this chapter and unless the context otherwise indicates, the following words shall have the following meanings.

- A. "Adequate" means that which is needed to accomplish the intended purpose in keeping with good public health practice.
- B. "Ante-Mortem Inspection" means the inspection of live rabbits prior to being slaughtered for sickness or disease.
- C. "Captive Bolt Apparatus" means a pistol or gun (also known as a, stun bolt gun, bolt gun, or stunner) device used for stunning live rabbits rendering them unconscious prior to slaughter.
- D. "Carcass" means any domestic rabbit carcass.
- E. "Cervical Dislocation Method" means a technique used in physical euthanasia of live rabbits by applying pressure to the neck and dislocating the spinal column from the skull or brain.
- F. "Corrosion Resistant Material" means those materials that maintain their original surface characteristics under prolonged contact with organic material, the normal use of cleaning compounds and bactericidal solutions, and other conditions of the environment.
- G. "Department" means the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF).
- H. "Easily Cleanable" means readily accessible and of such material and finish and so fabricated, that residues may be completely removed by usual cleaning methods.
- I. "Establishment" means the building or buildings or parts thereof, used for or in connection with, the manufacturing, processing, packaging, labeling or holding of human food.
- J. "Exsanguination" means the incision made to the carotid artery sufficient to a degree to cause death by blood loss.

- K. “Giblets” means the liver from which the bile sac has been removed and the heart which has been removed from the pericardial sac.
- L. “Heat-Treated” means the application of heat to a food to destroy microorganisms of public health significance.
- M. Post Mortem Inspection “means” the inspection of rabbit organs and tissue for evidence of disease which would make the meat unsuitable for human food.
- N. “Potentially Hazardous Food” means an animal food or any food that consists in whole, or in part, of milk or milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, shellfish, fish, edible crustacea, or their ingredients, including synthetic ingredients that is raw or heat-treated; a plant Food that is heat-treated or consists of raw seed sprouts, cut melons, cut leafy greens, cut tomatoes or mixtures of cut tomatoes that are not modified in a way so that they are unable to support pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation, or garlic-in-oil mixtures that are not modified in a way so that they are unable to support pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.
- O. “Rabbit” means any domesticated rabbit, whether live or dead.
- P. “Ready-to-Cook Rabbit” means any domestic rabbit which has been slaughtered for human food, from which the head, heart, kidneys, blood, skin, feet, and inedible viscera have been removed and that is ready to cook without need of further processing. Ready-to-cook rabbit also means any cut-up or disjointed portion of rabbit or any edible part.
- Q. “Sanitary” means that all buildings, equipment, and utensils shall be suitable for their intended use, so designed and of such material and workmanship as to be adequately cleanable and properly maintained.
- R. “Wholesome” means food in sound condition, clean, free from adulteration and otherwise suitable for human consumption.

2. RABBIT HEALTH

- A. The slaughter of rabbits demonstrating symptoms of sickness is prohibited.
- B. If live rabbits which are affected by any contagious disease which is transmissible to man are brought into an official establishment, such rabbits shall be segregated.
- C. All rabbits not passing ante-mortem inspections shall be killed, denatured and disposed of in a manner at a location approved by the Department.
- D. Rabbit carcasses, parts and organs not passing post-mortem inspection shall be condemned, denatured and disposed of in a manner at a location approved by the Department.

- E. The establishment may contract with a veterinarian of their choice for antemortem and post-mortem inspections, provided the veterinarian is licensed in Maine to practice veterinary medicine.
- F. The establishment shall assure that all rabbits slaughtered are free from medicated feed residues, medication, pesticides, and other residues.

3. LIVE RABBIT HOLDING

- A. Live rabbit holding areas shall be provided with adequate ventilation to prevent exposure to extreme temperatures.
- B. Extended Live rabbit holding times should be avoided, and water should be provided when delays are expected.
- C. Live rabbit holding pens shall be so constructed as to allow satisfactory ante-mortem examination and to permit proper cleaning.

4. RABBIT SLAUGHTER

- A. Establishments shall use humane methods to slaughter rabbits, so must render the animal unconscious prior to causing death from exsanguination.
- B. Rabbits shall be stunned prior to shackling; shackling and hanging of conscious rabbits shall be avoided.
- C. Rabbit stunning shall be accomplished by use of captive bolt apparatus or cervical dislocation method.
- D. Cervical dislocation shall be performed in a humane manner by a well-trained individual.
- E. The use of decapitation as a method of slaughter is prohibited.

5. ROOMS AND COMPARTMENTS

- A. Rooms and compartments used for edible products shall be separate and distinct from inedible products departments and from rooms where rabbits are slaughtered and skinned. Separate rooms shall be provided when required for conducting processing operations in a sanitary manner, and all rooms shall be of sufficient size to permit the installation of the necessary equipment for processing operations and the conduct of such operations in a sanitary manner.
- B. Rooms for separate operation. The establishment should have separate rooms for each of the following operations depending upon the various types of operations conducted, but, in no case, shall the receiving or holding of live rabbits or killing operations be permitted in rooms in which eviscerating operations are performed:

- (1) The receiving and feeding of live rabbits.
 - (2) Killing and skinning operations.
 - (3) Eviscerating, chilling, and packing operations for ready-to-cook rabbits.
 - (4) Heat-treatment, cooling and packaging of rabbit products.
 - (5) Inedible products departments and refuse room.
- C. Coolers and freezers of adequate size and capacity shall be provided to reduce the internal temperature of ready-to-cook rabbits prepared and otherwise handled in the establishment to 36 °F. within 24 hours.
- D. Refuse rooms shall be entirely separate from other rooms in the establishment and shall have tight fitting doors and be properly ventilated.
- E. Any storage and supply rooms shall be in good repair, kept dry, and maintained in a sanitary condition.
- F. The boiler room shall be a separate room to prevent it being a source of dirt and objectionable odors. Its entrance shall not be from any room where rabbits are prepared, processed, handled, and stored.
- G. Toilet rooms shall not open directly into rooms where rabbit products are exposed. They shall have self-closing doors and the room shall be ventilated to the outside of the building.

6. ESTABLISHMENT CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

- A. All floors in rooms where exposed products are prepared or handled shall be constructed of or finished with materials impervious to moisture, so they can be readily and thoroughly cleaned. Floors that are subject to flood type cleaning in killing, eviscerating, cooling, boning, heat-treated and cooling rooms shall have at least 1/4-inch grade per foot for complete runoff with no standing water. Floors shall be kept clean and in good repair.
- B. All walls, posts, partitions, and doors in rooms where exposed products are prepared or handled shall be smooth and constructed of materials impervious to moisture to enable thorough cleaning. Walls shall be kept clean and in good repair. All joints, seams and duck boards are to be sealed to prevent insanitary conditions.
- C. Ceilings shall be smooth and constructed of materials impervious to moisture to enable thorough cleaning. All joints and seams are to be sealed to prevent insanitary conditions. Ceilings shall be kept clean and in good repair.
- D. Fixtures, ducts, pipes shall not be suspended over working areas in a manner whereby condensation or dripping may contaminate food, food contact surfaces and food packaging materials.

7. SANITARY SEWER AND DRAINAGE

There shall be an efficient drainage and plumbing system for the establishment and premises.

A. All drains and gutters shall be properly installed with approved traps and vents. The drainage and plumbing system must permit the quick runoff of all water from the establishment, and surface water around the establishment and on the premises, and all such water shall be disposed of in such a manner as to prevent a nuisance or health hazard.

B. Sewage and Establishment Wastes

- (1) Discharge of sewerage or waste water shall be into a public or private sewage system. A private sewage system shall be approved by the appropriate municipality or regulatory authority prior to the Department's issuance of license or registration. The licensee or person registering the establishment shall provide the Department with written documentation from the municipality or regulatory authority that the private sewage system is properly designed and installed for intended use.
- (2) Grease traps which are connected with the sewerage system shall be suitably located but not near any edible products department or in any area where products are unloaded from or loaded into vehicles. To facilitate cleaning, such traps shall have inclined bottoms and be provided with suitable covers.
- (3) Toilet sewage lines shall be separate from gray water drainage lines to a point outside the buildings unless they are positively trapped to prevent backing up. Drainage from toilet bowls and urinals shall not be discharged into a grease catch basin.
- (4) All floor drains shall be equipped with traps, constructed so as to minimize clogging, and the plumbing shall be so installed as to prevent sewerage from backing up and from flooding the floor.
- (5) Floor drainage lines shall be constructed and repaired with approved materials according to law and shall be properly vented to outside air.
- (6) Where refrigerators are equipped with drains, such drains should be properly trapped and shall discharge through an air gap into the sewer system.

8. PLUMBING SYSTEM

A. A plumbing system and hoses that convey potable water shall be designed, constructed, and installed according to Law. The plumbing system shall be repaired according to law and maintained in good repair.

- B. Hot and cold water under pressure shall be provided in all areas, for the processing of food, the cleaning of equipment, utensils, and for employee sanitary facilities.
- C. A plumbing fixture such as ware wash and handwashing sinks, toilet, or urinal shall be easily cleanable.
- D. A backflow or back siphonage prevention device shall be installed on a water supply system or hose bibs for construction, installation, maintenance, inspection, and testing for that specific application and type of device.
- E. A cross connection by connecting a pipe or conduit between the drinking water system and a non-drinking water system or a water system of unknown quality is prohibited.
- F. A two-compartment sink constructed of durable non-corrosive material with drain board(s) or rack shall be provided for cleaning, sanitizing and air drying of utensils and equipment. The ware wash sink shall be provided with hot and cold running water under pressure. The ware washing sink(s) shall not be used for the disposal of waste water.

9. WATER SUPPLY

- A. The water supply, either public or private shall be ample, clean, and potable with adequate facilities for its distribution in the establishment and protection against contamination and pollution.
 - (1) Private water sources shall be tested annually by an accredited laboratory for coliform bacteria and nitrates.
 - (2) A hot water generation system shall be sized appropriately to meet peak demand for sanitation purposes and provide hot water at a suitable temperature, and under pressure as needed, in all areas where required for the processing of food, for the cleaning of equipment, utensils, and employee sanitary facilities.
 - (3) The refuse rooms shall be provided with adequate facilities for washing refuse cans and other equipment in the rooms; the rooms, cans, and equipment shall be cleaned after each day's use.

10. LIGHTING AND VENTILATION

- A. There shall be ample light, either natural or artificial or both, of good quality and well distributed where food or food ingredients are stored, processed or examined. Where equipment or utensils are washed, and in handwashing areas, dressing and locker rooms and toilets. Lighting shall be provided with safety-type light bulbs or properly shielded. All fixtures, skylights, or other glass suspended over exposed food in any step of preparation or otherwise shall be protected against food contamination in case of glass breakage.
- B. All rooms in which rabbits are killed, eviscerated, or otherwise processed shall have at least 30-foot candles of light intensity on all working surfaces.
- C. All rooms shall be provided with adequate ventilation or control equipment to minimize odors and vapors (including steam and noxious fumes) in areas where they may contaminate food; and fans and other air-blowing equipment must be located and

operated in a manner that minimizes the potential for contaminating food, food-contact surfaces and food-packaging materials.

11. EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS

- A. Equipment and utensils used for the preparation, processing, or other handling of any rabbit product in the establishment shall be so designed and of such material and workmanship as to be adequately cleanable, and shall be properly maintained.
- B. The design, construction, and use of equipment and utensils shall preclude the adulteration of food with lubricants, fuel, metal fragments, contaminated water, or any other contaminants.
- C. All equipment should be so installed and maintained as to facilitate the cleaning of the equipment and of all adjacent spaces.
- D. Food-contact surfaces made of shall be corrosion-resistant nontoxic materials designed to withstand the environment of their intended use and the action of food, and, if applicable, cleaning compounds and sanitizing agents. Food-contact surfaces shall be maintained to protect food from being contaminated by any source, including unlawful indirect food additives.
- E. Cleanable refuse containers shall be provided, and such containers shall be kept covered.
- F. Trucks and receptacles used for handling inedible products shall be constructed of non-corrosive material of such material and workmanship as to be adequately cleanable, properly maintained and shall be conspicuously and distinctly marked for inedible use only. Trucks and receptacles marked for inedible uses shall not be used for handling of any edible product
- G. Where grading bins are used for ready-to-cook rabbits, they shall be of sufficient number and capacity to handle the grading adequately without the use of makeshift bins, and all bins of ready-to-cook rabbits shall be kept off the floor.
- H. **Conveyors**
 - (1) Conveyors used in the preparation of ready-to-cook rabbits shall be of metal or other acceptable material and of such construction as to permit thorough and ready cleaning of both rabbit carcasses and inspection of their viscera.
 - (2) Overhead conveyors shall be so constructed and maintained that they do not allow grease, oil, or dirt to accumulate on the drop chain or shackle, which shall be of noncorrosive metal.
 - (3) Nonmetallic belt-type conveyors used in moving edible products shall be of water-proof composition.
- I. Inspection, eviscerating, and cutting tables shall be made of metal and be so constructed and placed to permit thorough cleaning.
- J. In establishments where no conveyors are used, each carcass shall be eviscerated in an individual metal tray of seamless construction.

- K. Water spray washing equipment shall be used for washing carcasses inside and out.
- L. Watertight receptacles shall be used for entrails and other waste resulting from preparation of ready-to-cook rabbits.
- M. Receptacles for holding or handling diseased carcasses and diseased parts of carcasses shall be so constructed as to be readily and thoroughly cleaned.
- N. Freezing equipment should be adequately equipped to freeze ready-to-cook rabbits solid in less than 48 hours. Ready-to-cook rabbits should be stored at 0 °F. or below, with the temperature maintained as constant as possible.

12. **CLEANING OF ROOMS AND COMPARTMENTS**

- A. The premises shall be kept free from refuse, waste materials, and all other sources of objectionable odors and conditions.
- B. All blood, offal, rabbits or parts of rabbits too severely damaged to be salvaged and all discarded containers and other materials shall be completely disposed of daily.
- C. All windows, doors, and light fixtures in the establishment shall be kept clean.
- D. All docks and rooms shall be kept clean and free from debris and unused equipment and utensils.
- E. Live rabbit receiving docks and receiving rooms shall be of such construction to permit their thorough cleaning, and such docks and rooms should be kept clean at all times.
- F. Floors in live rabbit holding rooms shall be cleaned with such regularity as may be necessary to maintain them in a sanitary condition.
- G. The killing and skinning room shall be kept clean and free from offensive odors at all times.
- H. The walls, floors, and all equipment and utensils used in the killing and skinning room shall be thoroughly washed and cleaned after each day's operation.
- I. The floor in the killing and skinning rooms shall be cleaned frequently during killing and skinning operations and be kept reasonably free from accumulated blood, offal, water, and dirt.
- J. All fixtures and equipment in the toilet room and locker room, as well as the room itself, shall be kept clean, sanitary, and in good repair.
- K. Cooler and freezer equipment shall be free from objectionable odors of any kind and shall be maintained in a sanitary condition (including, but not being limited to, the prevention of drippings from condensation and refrigerating coils onto products).

13. **CLEANING OF EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS**

- A. Equipment and utensils used for preparing or otherwise handling any product shall be kept clean and in a sanitary condition and in good repair.
 - (1) Pens or cages shall be cleaned regularly, and the manure removed from the establishment daily.

- (2) Food-contact surfaces, including utensils and food-contact surfaces of equipment used in the handling of ready-to cook and heat treated rabbit products, shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition when in use. All equipment and utensils shall be thoroughly washed and cleaned after each day's operation. Cleaned equipment and utensils shall be drained on racks and shall not be nested.
- (3) Tanks, vats, and other receptacles used to hold, or transport ready-to-cook rabbits shall be kept in a clean and sanitary condition.
- (4) Chilling vats or tanks, if practicable, shall be emptied after each use. They shall be thoroughly cleaned once daily, and after each cleaning operation, they shall be sanitized with approved chemical compounds.
- (5) When a tray evisceration operation is used, trays shall be single use and washed and sanitized after each use.
- (6) Cleaned and sanitized equipment food-contact surfaces and utensils shall be stored in a location and manner that protects food-contact surfaces from contamination.
- (7) Single-service articles (such as packaging materials) should be stored in appropriate containers and shall be handled, dispensed, used, and disposed of in a manner that protects against contamination of food or food-contact surfaces.

14. SUBSTANCES USED IN CLEANING AND SANITIZING; STORAGE OF TOXIC MATERIAL

- A. Cleaning compounds and sanitizing agents used in cleaning and sanitizing procedures shall be adequate for their intended use. Compliance with this requirement may be verified by any effective means including purchase of these substances under a supplier's guarantee or certification. Only the following toxic materials may be used or stored in an establishment where food is processed or exposed:
 - (1) Those required to maintain clean and sanitary conditions;
 - (2) Those necessary for use in laboratory testing procedures;
 - (3) Those necessary for establishment and equipment maintenance and operation; and
 - (4) Those necessary for use in the establishment's operations.
- B. Toxic cleaning compounds, sanitizing agents, and pesticide chemicals shall be identified, held, and stored in a manner that protects against contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, or food-packaging materials. All relevant regulations promulgated by other Federal, State, and local government agencies for the application, use, or holding of these products should be followed.
- C. A chemical sanitizer used in the sanitizing of food contact surfaces shall be used in accordance with the EPA-registered label use instructions.
- D. Sanitization maybe accomplished by one of the following methods:

- (1) Immersion for at least one-half (1/2) minute in clean, hot water at a temperature of at least 170° F.
 - (2) Immersion for at least one minute in a clean solution containing at least 50 parts per million of available chlorine as a hypochlorite and at a temperature of at least 75° F.
 - (3) Immersion for at least one minute in a clean solution containing at least 12.5 parts per million of available iodine and having a pH not higher than 5.0 and at a temperature of at least 75° F.
 - (4) Immersion in a quaternary ammonium compound solution having a minimum temperature of 75°F with a concentration as specified by the manufacturer's use directions included in the labeling.
- E. There shall be readily available a test kit or other device to accurately determined the concentration of the sanitizing solution being applied to food contact surfaces.

15. OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

- A. Operations and procedures involving the preparation, storing, or handling of any ready-to-cook or heat treated rabbit products shall be strictly in accord with clean and sanitary methods.
- (1) All operations in the receiving, inspecting, transporting, segregating, preparing, manufacturing, packaging, and storing of food shall be conducted in accordance with adequate sanitation principles. Appropriate quality control operations shall be employed to ensure that food is suitable for human consumption and that food-packaging materials are safe and suitable. All reasonable precautions shall be taken to ensure that production procedures do not contribute contamination from any source.
 - (2) Chemical, microbial, or extraneous-material testing procedures shall be used where and when necessary to identify sanitation failures or possible food contamination. All food that has become contaminated to the extent that it is adulterated within the meaning of 22 MRSA § 2156 of Maine law shall be rejected, only after consultation with and approved by the Department shall contaminated food be treated or processed to eliminate the contamination. Otherwise the contaminated food shall be denatured and properly disposed of in a manner approved by the Department.
 - (3) The evisceration of ready-to cook rabbit shall result in the head and all organs being separated from the carcass. The edible giblets shall be processed so that the bile sac is removed from the liver and the heart from the pericardial sac.
 - (4) Overall sanitation of the establishment shall be under the supervision of one or more competent individuals assigned responsibility for this function.

- (5) Raw materials and other ingredients shall be inspected and segregated or otherwise handled as necessary to ascertain that they are clean and suitable for processing into food and shall be stored under conditions that will protect against contamination and minimize deterioration.
- (6) Any ice used in contact with food or food contact surfaces shall be made from potable water. Ice manufacturing equipment shall not be located in the slaughter or evisceration rooms. All ice manufacturing equipment, shovels, scoops, storage and transportation bins shall be maintained in a sanitary condition through frequent cleaning including sanitization where indicated. Insofar as possible, equipment shall be taken apart for thorough cleaning.
- (7) Blood from the killing operation shall be confined to a relatively small area and kept from being splashed about the room.
- (8) In the final washing, the carcass shall be thoroughly sprayed with an abundant supply of potable water of such velocity to effectively clean the carcass.
- (9) The floors in the eviscerating room shall be kept clean and reasonably dry during eviscerating operations and free of all refuse.
- (10) Mechanized packaging equipment shall be maintained in good sanitary condition.
- (11) All offal resulting from the eviscerating operation shall be removed as often as necessary to prevent the development of a nuisance.
- (12) All food grade packaging material used for packaging rabbit products shall not transmit contaminants or objectionable substances to the product.
- (13) Operations which may cause cross-contamination with bacteria, molds, toxic chemicals, filth, or the like shall be separated by partitions of such size and construction as to prevent cross-contamination or located in different parts of the establishment.
- (14) Effective measures shall be taken to protect against the contamination of food, food contact surfaces and food packaging materials in or on the premises from dogs, cats, flies, rats, mice, and other vermin or animals.
- (15) Compressed air or other gases mechanically introduced into food or used to clean food-contact surfaces or equipment shall be treated in such a way that food is not contaminated with unlawful indirect food additives.
- (16) Food-manufacturing areas and equipment used for manufacturing human food shall not be used to manufacture nonhuman food-grade animal feed or inedible products, unless there is no reasonable possibility for the contamination of the human food.
- (17) Storage and transportation of finished food shall be under conditions that will protect food against physical, chemical, and microbial contamination as well as against deterioration of the food and the container.

16. CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE OF PERSONNEL

- A. All persons working in direct contact with food, food-contact surfaces, and food-packaging materials shall conform to hygienic practices while on duty to the extent necessary to protect against contamination of food. The methods for maintaining cleanliness include, but are not limited to:
- (1) Wearing outer garments suitable to the operation in a manner that protects against the contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, or food-packaging materials.
 - (2) Maintaining adequate personal cleanliness.
 - (3) Washing hands thoroughly (and sanitizing if necessary to protect against contamination with undesirable microorganisms) in an adequate hand-washing facility before starting work, after each absence from the work station, after using the bathroom and at any other time when the hands may have become soiled or contaminated.
 - (4) Removing all unsecured jewelry and other objects that might fall into food, equipment, or containers, and removing hand jewelry that cannot be adequately sanitized during periods in which food is manipulated by hand. If such hand jewelry cannot be removed, it may be covered by material which can be maintained in an intact, clean, and sanitary condition and which effectively protects against the contamination by these objects of the food, food-contact surfaces, or food-packaging materials.
 - (5) Maintaining gloves, if they are used in food handling, in an intact, clean, and sanitary condition. The gloves should be of an impermeable material.
 - (6) Wearing, where appropriate, and in an effective manner, hair nets, headbands, caps, beard covers, or other effective hair restraints.
 - (7) Storing clothing or other personal belongings in areas other than where food is exposed or where equipment or utensils are washed.
 - (8) Confining the following to areas other than where food may be exposed or where equipment or utensils are washed: eating food, chewing gum, drinking beverages, or using tobacco.
 - (9) Taking any other necessary precautions to protect against contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, or food-packaging materials with microorganisms or foreign substances including, but not limited to, perspiration, hair, cosmetics, tobacco, chemicals, and medicines applied to the skin.

17. TEMPERATURES AND COOLING AND FREEZING PROCEDURES

- A. Temperatures and procedures which are necessary for cooling and freezing of ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products in accordance with sound commercial practices shall be maintained in the coolers and freezers, and chilling temperatures and procedures shall also be in accordance with sound commercial practice.
- (1) **Cooling.** Immediately after evisceration and washing of the rabbit carcass, it shall be placed in a cooling tank containing running cold tap water to remove the animal heat from the carcass. Carcasses shall not be allowed to remain in the cooling tank for longer than 1 hour.
 - (2) **Air chilling.** Immediately after the initial water chilling, the carcasses shall be placed in cooling racks and placed in a refrigerated cooler at a temperature which will reduce the internal temperature of the carcasses to 36 °F within 24 hours.
 - (3) **Freezing.** When ready-to-cook and heat treated rabbit products are frozen, the carcasses should receive an initial rapid freezing under such packaging, temperature, air circulation, and stacking conditions which will result in freezing the carcasses solid in less than 48 hours. Frozen ready-to-cook rabbits and heat treated rabbit products shall be held under conditions which will maintain the product in a solidly frozen state with temperature maintained as constant as possible.
 - (4) **Refrigeration.** Immediately after packaging, all ready-to-cook rabbits, shall be refrigerated and held at 36° F to 40° F.
- B. Each freezer and cold storage compartment used to store and hold food capable of supporting growth of microorganisms shall be fitted with an indicating thermometer, temperature-measuring device, or temperature-recording device so installed as to show the temperature accurately within the compartment.
- C. **Heat Treated** rabbit products shall be chilled:
- (1) Within 2 hours, from 135 ° F to 70° F; and
 - (2) Within a total of 6 hours, from 135 ° F to 41° F or less.

18. TOILET FACILITIES

- A. Each establishment shall provide its employees with adequate, readily accessible toilet facilities. Compliance with this requirement may be accomplished by:
- (1) Maintaining the facilities in a sanitary condition.
 - (2) Keeping the facilities in good repair at all times.
 - (3) Providing self-closing doors that do not open into areas where food is exposed to airborne contamination, except where alternate means have been taken to protect against such contamination (such as double doors or positive air-flow systems).

19. HAND-WASHING FACILITIES

- A. Hand-washing facilities shall be adequate and convenient, and provided with running water at a suitable temperature. Compliance with this requirement may be accomplished by providing:
- (1) A handwashing sink(s) and, where appropriate, hand-sanitizing facilities conveniently located in each room used for slaughter and processing. The handwashing sink shall be equipped to provide water at a temperature of at least 100° F) through a mixing valve or combination faucet. Each sink shall be provided with hand soap, disposable towels and waste receptacle.
 - (2) Readily understandable signs directing employees handling food, food equipment or food-packaging materials, to wash and, where appropriate, sanitize their hands before they start work, after each absence from post of duty, and when their hands may have become soiled or contaminated. These signs shall be posted in toilet rooms and in the processing room(s) and in all other areas where employees may handle such food, materials, or surfaces.

20. PREMISES

- A. The grounds of the outer building or buildings shall be reasonably clean and well drained, free from any materials or conditions that may create rodent, bird and/or insect harborages and free from other nuisances and sources of contamination.
- B. Roads, yards, and parking lots must be maintained so that they do not constitute a source of contamination in areas where food is exposed.
- C. Areas that may contribute contamination to food by seepage, foot-borne filth, or providing a breeding place for pests must be adequately drained.
- D. Systems for waste treatment and disposal must be operated in an adequate manner so that they do not constitute a source of contamination in areas where food is exposed.

21. PEST CONTROL

- A. No pests shall be allowed in any area of an establishment. Effective measures shall be taken to exclude pests from the processing areas and to protect against the contamination of food on the premises by pests.
- B. Where necessary, adequate screening or other protection against pests shall be provided.
- C. The use of insecticides or rodenticides is permitted only under precautions and restrictions that will protect against the contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, and food-packaging materials.

22. RECORDKEEPING

- A. Rabbit processors and manufacturers shall code products so to identify specific food lots affected by contamination, spoilage or by sanitation failure and shall separate each lot from non-affected products.

- (1) Individual ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products labeled as consumer commodities for retail sale shall be individually coded, in addition to coding the master carton.
 - (2) Individual ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products, when not labeled as a consumer commodity but offered for sale as a foodservice item do not need to be individually coded but shall have a code affixed to the master carton.
- B. The operator must have written procedures explaining the code information and how it relates to production records.
- C. The operator shall maintain production records that document:
- (1) Date the product was processed.
 - (2) Name of the product.
 - (3) Units produced.
 - (4) Size of the product
 - (5) Code by lot.

23. LABELING

- A. Ready-to cook and heat-treated rabbit products shall be labeled as specified in law, including 21 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 101 (Food Labeling), and 22 M.R.S. §2157.
- B. Ready-to cook and heat-treated rabbit products shall be labeled with safe handling instructions in the following manner:
- (1) Individual ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products labeled as consumer commodities and distributed as a refrigerated product shall have both the product and master carton labeled conspicuously with the wording “Keep Refrigerated or Freeze”.
 - (2) Individual ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products labeled as consumer commodities and distributed as a frozen product shall have both the product and master carton conspicuously labeled with the wording “Keep Frozen”.
 - (3) Individual ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products labeled as consumer commodities and distributed as a frozen product with the intent to be thawed and offered for retail as a refrigerated product shall conspicuously label both the individual product and master carton label with the wording “Previously Handled Frozen for Your Protection, Refreeze or Keep Refrigerated.”
 - (4) Individual ready-to-cook and heat-treated rabbit products that are not labeled as consumer commodities and intended to be sold as a bulk foodservice commodity shall have their master cartons labeled with safe handling instruction in the manner specified in sections 1 and 2.

- (5) The safe handling statement shall be conspicuously placed on the bottom 1/3 of the product label's principal face panel in capitalized letters not less than 3/8 of an inch in height.

24. LICENSING

- A. **Application and Fee.** An owner or operator of a food processing and manufacturing establishment used for rabbit processing shall annually apply to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for a license for the establishment. A license fee of \$50.00 shall accompany each application. In order to allow for the staggering of license expiration dates, initial licenses may be issued for a period exceeding 12 months. In such cases, the initial license fee shall be increased in proportion to the length of the license period.
- B. **Inspection and Issuance.** Before a license is issued or renewed, the Department shall inspect the premises of the applicant. Following inspection and receipt of the application and required fee, the Commissioner shall within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the application issue a license to operate any rabbit processing establishment which is found to comply with 22 M.R.S.A. §2151 *et seq.* and the provisions of this Chapter and Chapter 358, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.
- C. Any warehouse or warehouse space within the establishments covered by this rule shall comply with 01-001 CMR Chapter (Food Storage Warehouse), but only one license fee need be paid.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

22 MRS §§ 2167, 2168 & 2169

EFFECTIVE DATE:

July 27, 1987

EFFECTIVE DATE (ELECTRONIC CONVERSION):

May 4, 1996

CONVERTED TO MS WORD:

May 20, 2008

CORRECTIONS:

February, 2014 – agency names, formatting

AMENDED:

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