

### **Farmers selling meat directly must follow proper inspections, licensing and labeling**

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Farmers selling meat directly from the farm to consumers need to comply with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulations and have proper licenses from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to legally sell their products. Jeannine Schwehofer, [MSU Extension](#) educator, recommends farmers learn the rules to avoid legal problems.

According to Michigan law, cuts of meat sold directly to consumers from the farm must be USDA inspected, and sellers are required to have additional licensing, including a Food Establishment License from MDARD. The USDA must also inspect meat sold to restaurants and grocery stores and at farmers markets .

“The law does not distinguish between meat being sold by the carcass or as individual retail cuts,” said Schwehofer. “In addition to inspection requirements, all packages of meat must follow labeling requirements.”

The USDA inspection mark must appear on all packages of meat. Labels must also include the common name of the product, the net weight, the date the meat was packaged, the processor’s name and address, and safe handling instructions.

No label may be false or misleading to the consumer, and farmers must get prior approval to add anything to the package label beyond the requirements.

Only the owner of the live animal, his or her family members and non-paying guests may consume slaughtered and processed meat that is custom exempt (meat processed without inspection). Mark all packages of custom exempt meat “not for sale”; the meat may not be sold or donated to anyone.

For more information on selling meat or meat labeling, visit [MSU Extension News](#). This online resource features helpful articles about various topics submitted by MSU Extension experts throughout the state. Find MSU Extension News at [news.msue.msu.edu](http://news.msue.msu.edu). In addition, check out the USDA FSIS website section on food labeling at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/meat\\_&\\_poultry\\_labeling\\_terms/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/meat_&_poultry_labeling_terms/index.asp).

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