

Findings and Recommendations Regarding the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection Program Pursuant to LD 1198

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACF Committee	Maine Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
AIP	Agricultural Infrastructure Investment Program
BAFRR	Maine DACF Bureau of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources (The Bureau)
CEI	Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
CFI	Maine DACF Consumer Food Inspection and Licensing Program
C.M.R.	Code of Maine Rules
DACF	Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (The Department)
DHHS	Maine Department of Health and Human Services
DOC	Maine Department of Corrections
FFY	federal fiscal year
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points
MMPI	Maine DACF Meat and Poultry Inspection Program
MPILP	Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program
M.R.S. / M.R.S.A.	Maine Revised Statutes / Maine Revised Statutes Annotated
QAR	Maine DACF Division of Quality Assurance and Regulation (The Division)
UMaine	University of Maine
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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I. Overview and Purpose

Through *Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Assess Its Current Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs*¹, the Maine Legislature directed the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF/Department) to conduct a review of the State's meat and poultry inspection programs. The Legislature recognized the essential role these programs play in ensuring food safety, protecting public health, supporting local agricultural economies, and maintaining consumer confidence in Maine-produced meat and poultry.

The Resolve calls for the Department to consult with livestock and poultry producers and processors, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and other stakeholders that the department determines necessary. The Resolve requests that the Department survey meat and poultry producers and processors to gather feedback on rules, regulations, policies, and practices that affect the regulated community.

The Department contracted with a consultant and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension to conduct three listening sessions in August and October 2025, during which discussions were held with stakeholders, producers, and processors. Additionally, the Department contracted with Extension to conduct an online survey to collect information about the experiences of Maine producers and processors. The Department's goal was to identify strategies and recommendations that uphold the highest food safety standards while better supporting the State's livestock and poultry industries. More specifically, the Department had the following objectives when gathering feedback:

For Processors:

- Understand their experience seeking and maintaining licensure, including their opinions on the licensure and inspection processes.
- Identify how licensure and inspection processes can be made more transparent, efficient, and/or accessible.

For Producers:

- Understand their experience in securing access to their desired level of processing.
- Understand their opinions about how State programs impact their meat enterprises.
- Gather ideas for improving these State programs.

Additionally, the Resolve directs the Department to:

- Evaluate its current statutory authorities, rules, regulations, policies, and practices, including those involving investigations, enforcement, and staff training.
- Review the existing poultry processor exemptions.
- Review its existing cooperative agreement with the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and that agreement's related requirements.
- Develop strategies to ensure uniform interpretation of the USDA's regulations and exemptions.

Finally, the Legislature instructed the Department to report its strategies, findings, and recommendations — including any suggested legislation — to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry by January 15, 2026. This document fulfills that directive and provides the framework for legislative consideration of potential statutory or policy changes.

¹ Resolves 2025, ch. 41, 132nd Legislature (emergency). See Appendix A.

II. Executive Summary

Feedback from producers and processors highlighted challenges and potential solutions in four main areas:

1. Ambiguities in the current state regulatory framework
2. Challenges with communication, outreach, and access to technical assistance
3. Insufficient slaughter and processing capacity for Maine producers
4. High barriers to entry for processors

Challenges 1 and 2 can be addressed directly by DACF and the Maine Legislature. Identified ambiguities in statute and rule can be streamlined and clarified. Several important fixes are already underway and are discussed in detail in this report. Likewise, with adequate resources and staffing, DACF can provide clearer, more responsive guidance to those already processing meat in the State of Maine and to those seeking to enter this industry.

Challenges 3 and 4 are more difficult. The State has limited tools to change the underlying economic dynamics of meat and poultry processing in Maine. Nevertheless, DACF does use this report to propose several strategic interventions that could help alleviate the challenging economic realities of meat processing.

III. How Maine Currently Upholds Food Safety for Meat and Poultry

In the US, it is primarily a federal responsibility to ensure that meat and poultry are safe to eat. When Maine upholds aspects of the meat and poultry regime, it does so on authority delegated by the federal government. Before delving into how the system could be improved or reformed, it is important to first lay out how the current Maine system is designed and functions. Two separate programs, the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection (MMPI) Program and the Consumer Food Inspection (CFI) Program, perform separate functions under separate legal authorities, although their work does intersect.

Maine's Meat and Poultry Processing Landscape and State Inspection Capacity

Overview of the MMPI Program

The Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection (MMPI) program, administered by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) through the Quality Assurance and Regulations (QAR) Division, ensures that meat and poultry products produced in Maine are processed safely and in a sanitary manner. It operates alongside the USDA's inspection program, and MMPI must uphold standards at least equal to those imposed by the USDA.² The program's responsibilities include:

- Conducting inspections at eight state-inspected facilities, all certified for Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS). CIS certification requires continuous inspection, meaning inspectors are in the plant at any time slaughter is being conducted.
- Performing food safety inspections at 60 custom slaughterhouses and processors. Custom inspection is conducted annually and is intended to ensure the adequacy of food safety systems and protocols. ***In addition to MMPI inspection, the CFI program inspects the commercial kitchen portion of these businesses to ensure they have a physical facility that can meet required sanitary conditions.***
- Inspecting 61 poultry operations, which fall under the exemption category for fewer than 1,000 birds.

²To compare scope, eight establishments in Maine operate under MMPI inspection: four slaughter and processing facilities and four processing-only facilities. Twenty-four Maine businesses operate under USDA inspection: eight slaughter and processing facilities and 15 processing-only facilities. Establishments may choose Federal inspection because they are more familiar with USDA-FSIS than the state program, or because they want to be able to export out of the country. Establishments may choose MMPI because they want to be able to work with local officials on issues and for assistance rather than deal with Federal staff in Washington, D.C. MMPI also offers significant assistance with review of HACCP programs.

State-inspected slaughter facilities account for approximately half of Maine’s total red meat slaughter capacity. Meat from custom processors is marked “Not-For-Sale” and intended solely for personal consumption by the owner, family, or non-paying guests.

The MMPI program operates under two Cooperative Agreements with USDA-FSIS: one authorizes Maine’s state meat inspection program, and the other enables the CIS program, allowing state-inspected facilities to sell meat across state lines.

Inspection Capacity and Production Statistics

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024, MMPI-inspected facilities processed 1,552,901 pounds of red meat, and in FFY25, total red meat processing was 1,484,496 pounds. The slight decrease was due to one facility transitioning to USDA inspection at the end of FFY24 and another ceasing operation in FFY25. Despite these changes, production in FFY25 still exceeded that in FFY23 by 17,667 pounds, reflecting continued strong throughput across the remaining state-inspected facilities. MMPI currently does not maintain poultry production data, as the previous MMPI-inspected poultry facility moved to USDA inspection in FFY22. Overall, the eight MMPI-inspected slaughter facilities represent approximately half of the state’s total red meat slaughter capacity, highlighting the critical role MMPI plays in Maine’s meat processing infrastructure.

Historical Context and Pandemic Response

The MMPI program was established by the Maine Legislature in 2003 to supplement existing USDA-inspected facilities, effectively doubling the state’s slaughter and processing capacity. By 2019, however, both USDA- and state-inspected facilities were operating at or above full capacity, and demand for slaughter and processing continued to increase in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this surge, DACF reallocated a temporarily vacant position to MMPI in 2020, allowing the program to provide additional inspections and reduce backlogs.

The Department also partnered with the University of Maine and utilized trained inspectors from DACF’s Weights and Measures and Consumer Products Inspection programs to support inspections at three custom facilities under temporary grants of inspection during the summer of 2020. By 2021, the MMPI program was operating at full capacity, and legislative budget support funded a limited-term analyst and inspector position, both of which were subsequently converted to permanent roles in later budgets.

Future Capacity Considerations

As additional slaughter and processing facilities come online—growth the State has tried to encourage through investments from the Agricultural Infrastructure Investment Program and other initiatives—additional inspection will be required. The program continues to monitor production trends, facility openings, and staffing needs to ensure Maine’s meat and poultry processing infrastructure can meet both current and future demand.

Maine Consumer Food Inspection and Licensing Program and State Inspection Capacity

Overview of the CFI Program

The Maine Consumer Food Inspection and Licensing Program (CFI), administered by DACF through the QAR division, is responsible for licensing and inspecting a broad range of non-retail food and beverage operations in the State. These include commercial food processors, bakeries, beverage plants, home food manufacturing operations, food storage warehouses, and other food production and processing facilities. The CFI program is sometimes referred to as the Retail and Manufactured Foods Program, reflecting its historical scope and interaction with retail food regulation. Additionally, the CFI program licenses and inspects food and beverage production sites within the cannabis industry in Maine.

Licensing and inspection activities conducted under the CFI program are designed to ensure that food is processed, prepared, packaged, stored, and offered for sale in a sanitary and safe manner in order to protect public health. To support this work, QAR collaborates closely with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the FDA, and the USDA to investigate foodborne illness outbreaks and coordinate product recalls.

Regulatory Authority

Food safety oversight in Maine is shared between DACF and DHHS, with regulatory authority divided primarily by type of food activity. DACF and DHHS jointly administer the Maine Food Code (01-001 C.M.R. ch. 331), which establishes regulatory standards for retail food establishments, such as restaurants, grocery stores, and other food service operations. Under this framework, DHHS serves as the primary licensing and inspection authority for retail food establishments, while DACF supports administration of the Food Code.

Additionally, QAR independently administers a separate set of regulations under 01-001 C.M.R. that apply to non-retail food activities, which are licensed directly through the CFI program. These regulations cover sectors such as beverage plant production, maple syrup and apple cider processing, home food manufacturing (ch. 345), bakeries (ch. 341), food processing and manufacturing facilities (ch. 343), and food storage warehouses (ch. 344), among other food and beverage sectors regulated by the department.³

Inspection and Licensing Activity

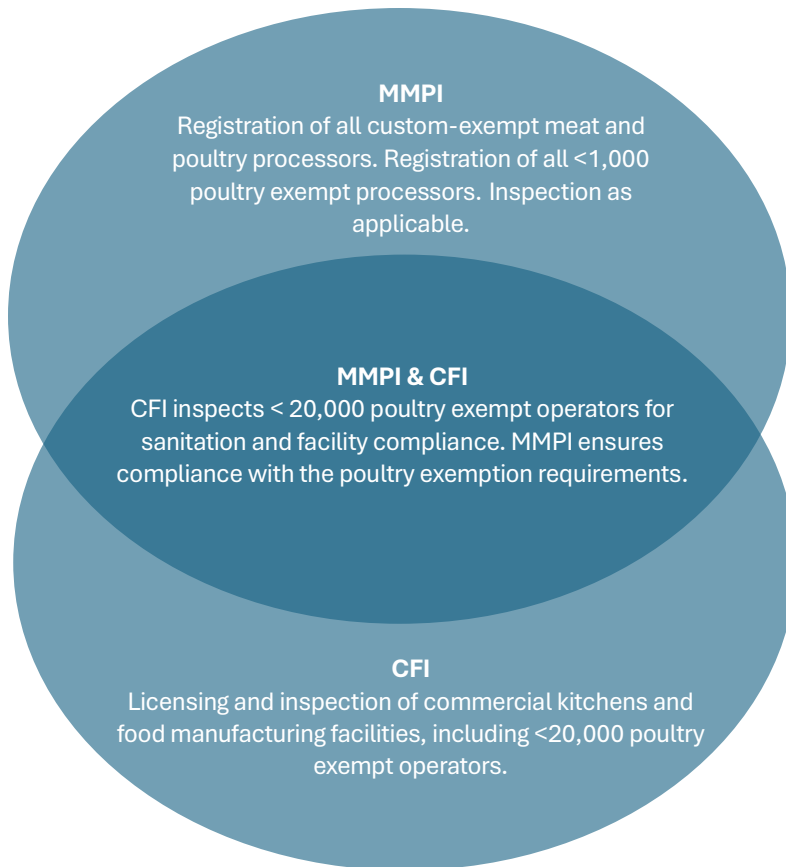
As of 2024, the CFI program licensed 9,216 food establishments, including 1,439 commercial food processors and 1,395 home food processors. During the same period, the program conducted 4,032 inspections, including 2,092 retail food inspections, 868 food processing inspections, and 60 warehouse inspections, reflecting the breadth of the program's regulatory responsibilities and inspection workload.

³ Maine municipalities may assert food sovereignty, which exempts some food establishments from some regulations. However, food sovereignty exemptions never extend to meat and poultry processing per 7 MRS §285.

How the MMPI and CFI Programs Overlap and Differ

The MMPI and CFI programs both ensure that Maine’s food products are safe and sanitary, but they have distinct roles and regulatory frameworks. MMPI focuses specifically on meat and poultry inspection, including the registration and oversight of poultry producers under the fewer than 1,000-bird (<1K) and fewer than 20,000-bird (<20K) poultry exemptions. Producers—who in most cases also perform processing under the exemption—must choose either the Grower-Producer or Small Enterprise category. These <20K producers must have their facilities

licensed by the CFI program, which ensures that exempt poultry products are produced in sanitary conditions, typically within commercial kitchens. Exemption designations can sometimes be amended during the calendar year with CFI approval.



The CFI program primarily oversees the sanitary and safe operation of commercial kitchens and food processing facilities, including <20K poultry operations, under rule chapter 343 and, where applicable, rule chapter 331 (the Maine Food Code). Although rule chapter 343 was originally developed over 45 years ago for manufactured foods and shellfish processing—not specifically for poultry—it establishes minimum standards to ensure all facilities produce wholesome and safe food. CFI inspections of <20K poultry facilities are typically conducted on a routine basis, with the frequency determined by risk factors such as facility size, complexity, and compliance history. In practice, MMPI complements CFI inspections by ensuring poultry exempt facilities adhere to federal and state exemption requirements.

In summary, MMPI ensures compliance with poultry-specific exemptions, registration, and processing requirements, while CFI enforces broader food safety standards that apply to the facility as a whole. Together, the programs provide overlapping yet distinct layers of oversight that protect consumers and support safe poultry production in Maine.

Federal Authority and Mandates

Federal meat and poultry statutes and the regulations promulgated under these laws are extensive and detailed. The ability of any state to operate its own state meat and poultry inspection program is highly regulated by federal statutes and regulations. A state’s ability to be awarded and keep its state meat and poultry inspection program is dependent on strict adherence to federal regulations by the program. State meat and poultry programs are audited at least once a year by Federal auditors to ensure compliance with Federal laws and regulations. States will not be awarded the annual cooperative agreements that allow them to operate state meat and poultry inspection programs unless they demonstrate compliance with federal laws and statutes. State programs must also demonstrate that their state has not enacted laws or regulations that contravene or undermine federal laws and statutes.

IV. Themes from Producer & Processor Feedback and Corresponding Recommendations

The tables in this section summarize four key themes identified from producer and processor feedback collected during the listening sessions and survey. Each table has three columns:

- Challenges: A summary of the concerns that producers and processors identified.
- Limitations: A bulleted list of actions that are outside the State's control.
- Possible Solutions: A list of actions that fall within the State's authority.

Following each table is a summary of the Department's recommendations. For concerns within the Department's purview that QAR has already begun to address, this section provides a brief description of relevant actions underway or completed. It also presents a summary of the Department's recommended and non-recommended actions, along with a concise explanation of the rationale for each position.



1. Ambiguities in the Regulatory Framework

Challenges	Limitations	Possible Solutions
<p>Some processors reported confusion or challenges related to how regulations are interpreted (e.g., requirements may be enforced differently by different inspectors). DACF has previously heard similar feedback about confusing regulations via ongoing public engagement. Overall, these concerns are most frequently raised by processors operating under one of the poultry exemptions.</p> <p>Some processors also recommended clarifying and simplifying the regulations, while others felt inspections should focus exclusively on food safety rather than “unnecessary regulations.”</p>	<p><i>At the state level, Maine cannot:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Override federal rules.• Change federal inspection requirements.	<p><i>At the state level, Maine could:</i></p> <p>Update statutes and rules regarding poultry exemptions to support more consistent compliance and reduce misinterpretation. The relevant regulations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 M.R.S. ch. 562-A, <i>Preparation of Livestock Poultry Products for Human Consumption</i>, which addresses, among other things, the 20,000-poultry exemptions, and• Rule ch. 348, major substantive rules addressing the 1,000-poultry exemption (01-001 C.M.R. ch. 348). <p>Maintain and expand inspector training, including communication training, to support clear and consistent interpretation of regulations. Communication is discussed in more detail in the next theme, <i>Challenges with Communication, Outreach, and Access to Technical Assistance</i>.</p>



Department Recommendations

Ambiguities in the Regulatory Framework

Completed or In-Progress Actions

During the 132d Legislature, DACF completed major substantive rulemaking to amend 01-001 C.M.R. ch. 348, *On-Farm Raised, Slaughter and Processing of Less than 1,000 Ready-To-Cook Whole Poultry Carcasses*. Rules were introduced on December 11, 2025. The public comment period was open from December 11, 2025, to January 12, 2026, and a public hearing was held on January 2, 2026, to gather input on the proposed revisions. After a hearing before the ACF Committee on March 19, 2026, followed by a unanimous vote of Ought to Pass, the rules were formally adopted on April 13, 2026.

Recommended Actions

Attached as Appendix E of this report are proposals for amending 22 M.R.S.A. ch. 562-A, *Preparation of Livestock Poultry Products for Human Consumption*. The proposed amendments would include updating key definitions and clarifying authorities and responsibilities within the licensing and permitting processes. These changes would likely result in more consistent compliance and interpretation.

Possible Future Actions

While Maine does not currently require specific food safety certifications for licensing or registration under 01-001 C.M.R. ch. 346, inspected establishments must comply with the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) preventive approach, sanitation, record-keeping, and operational control provisions. Compliance is evaluated through inspection rather than proof of training. (See page 9 for a discussion of historic and current HACCP training in Maine).

Several states, including California, Washington, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania, have established formal requirements for food safety or HACCP training as part of meat and poultry processor licensure. These states require key personnel to complete recognized programs that cover HACCP principles, sanitation, record-keeping, facility operations, and regulatory compliance. Such programs help ensure that operators understand inspection expectations and implement effective food safety systems, particularly for ready-to-eat and poultry products.

Maine could establish a similar certification program through partnerships with community colleges, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, or other accredited institutions, providing structured training in HACCP, sanitation, and regulatory compliance. Incorporating a baseline food safety or HACCP training requirement into the chapter 346 rules, whether as a licensure prerequisite or a strongly recommended pathway, could strengthen regulatory clarity, establish a common foundation of knowledge among licensees, support more consistent implementation of inspection requirements, and potentially enhance food safety outcomes.

Such an approach would need to be carefully structured to account for any potential increased compliance burden on small and very small establishments. Options could include phased implementation, flexible training pathways, cost reductions or elimination of training costs, or recognition of equivalent experience to ensure accessibility while maintaining the intended improvements in food safety and regulatory consistency.



2. Challenges with Communication, Outreach, and Access to Technical Assistance

Challenges	Limitations	Possible Solutions
<p>Some processors stated that inspectors don't have time to provide technical assistance. Survey respondents had mixed reviews: some felt they had access to the technical assistance they needed, while others did not.</p> <p>Several survey respondents felt that DACF is slow to respond to technical assistance requests, that requesting assistance can be a challenge, and that DACF staff are less accessible than in the past.</p> <p>Some respondents noted feeling intimidated by inspection staff.</p> <p>Some participants in the listening sessions noted that communications mailed to them, such as notices and warnings, often arrive late or not at all.</p>	<p><i>At the state level, Maine cannot:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require inspectors to provide extensive consultation during active inspections when doing so would conflict with federal duties or safety requirements. • Prioritize TA requests over inspection duties. • Eliminate federally required mailed notices in programs where federal law mandates written postal notification. 	<p><i>At the state level, Maine could:</i></p> <p>DACF could offer regular workshops, webinars, and dedicated “technical assistance hours” for producers and processors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular office hours create predictable opportunities for communication where the public knows they can reach DACF staff without competing with inspectors’ field duties, reducing frustration from missed calls or delayed follow-up. This helps build trust and ensures producers can get timely guidance before small issues escalate. • The Department can develop a library of recorded trainings, short video explanations, or topic-specific webinars that producers can access anytime, which is particularly valuable during busy farm seasons. <p>Add dedicated staff position(s) focused on providing guidance, answering questions, and supporting compliance. This targeted role would ensure timely, program-specific assistance for all stakeholders.</p> <p>Draft clearer guidance and adjust training to ensure that all state inspectors interpret the regulations consistently for their individual programs, and that they always maintain professionalism.</p>



Department Recommendations

Challenges with Communication, Outreach, and Access to Technical Assistance

Completed or In-Progress Actions

Meat and poultry processors in Maine identified several challenges with obtaining technical assistance from DACF. The Department has implemented and is planning several initiatives specifically designed to address these challenges, improve accessibility, and ensure timely and accurate support for processors.

HACCP Training

Several processors requested more structured technical support related to food safety and HACCP plans. To address this, the Legislature tasked the University of Maine (UMaine) with leading education and training initiatives⁴. In response, the University continues to develop meat and poultry processing and HACCP training programs, led by Dr. Gülsün Akdemir Evrendilek, with offerings planned to begin in Spring 2026. These programs will provide practical, hands-on guidance that complements DACF's regulatory oversight, ensuring that processors have the knowledge and skills to implement food safety practices effectively.

Previously, QAR provided an introductory HACCP class in summer 2024 and a specialized HACCP class for dried and cured products in March 2025, filling a local training gap left by UMaine's temporary course pause in 2020. These classes covered critical topics, including meat and poultry science, USDA draft guidelines for specialty processes such as smoking, drying, and curing, and tools for selecting and monitoring critical control points. Registration fees for UMaine Cooperative Extension's HACCP courses can vary by offering and year; potential attendees should contact Extension directly for current information.

QAR-led courses were discontinued in 2025 as UMaine resumed HACCP training offerings, including a 2-Day Meat and Poultry HACCP Course that introduces participants to the fundamentals of HACCP and provides hands-on experience developing a HACCP plan, along with opportunities to engage in additional food safety training pathways. These courses address the challenge of limited technical guidance by providing processors with accessible, structured learning opportunities.

Inspection and Database Software Improvements

To address concerns about late or missing communications, DACF is implementing new inspection and database software in 2026. The system will include an online portal for license renewals and enable direct electronic communication with licensees, such as renewal notifications and compliance warnings. Integrated with the existing mail system, the platform employs a dual-notice policy, ensuring that if one communication channel fails, the other still reaches the licensee promptly. This reduces the risk of missed or delayed notices, ensuring that critical regulatory information reaches processors reliably.

Guidance Documents, Online Resources, and Program Support

DACF continues to review and update its online resources within existing staff resources, time, and funds. Over time, the Department has produced a comprehensive collection of 60+ guidance documents to support producers and processors in navigating the inspection and licensing process. Additionally, the MMPI Program website provides a wealth of information and links to the guidance document. Those seeking to obtain or maintain licensure are encouraged to review these documents and contact staff with questions.

⁴ LD 1767 in the 131st Legislature authorized one-time funding of \$142,500 and required the University of Maine Cooperative Extension to offer training on quality control, HACCP principles, and meat-cutting techniques.

MMPI staff respond to multiple inspection inquiries each week via phone and email. All queries to MMPI from the public are answered within three business days, often sooner.

Staff Food Safety Training

CPI's complete a substantial and structured series of courses throughout their careers. New hires begin with foundational training during their onboarding year, covering core topics such as prevailing statutes and regulations, public health principles, microbiology, epidemiology, and HACCP, comprising 28 classes. Core microbiology training alone encompasses over a dozen courses, addressing topics ranging from foodborne bacteria, viruses, and parasites to control measures such as refrigeration, thermal processing, sanitation, and good manufacturing practices.

In addition to initial training, CPIs participate in continuing education throughout their careers, including courses on the FDA Food Code, plan review for food establishments, risk-based inspection methods, special processes at retail, food defense, food processing and technology, and current Good Manufacturing Practices, comprising 11 classes. Specialized courses also cover juice HACCP, acidified foods, and seafood inspections.

Collectively, CPI training includes 39 courses, totaling hundreds of hours, and provides both theoretical knowledge and practical, hands-on experience to ensure inspectors are prepared to assess food safety across a wide range of production, processing, and retail environments. A full list of the training curriculum can be found in Appendix G.

Additional Staff Training

As is typical of any regulatory program, experiences span a spectrum. Feedback from the LD 1198 process indicated that some processors view their interactions with the Department as helpful and professional, while others feel challenged or, at times, discouraged. These differences reflect the inherent tension between oversight and operations rather than a single pattern of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Recognizing this variability is essential for understanding where the system works well and where improvements may strengthen relationships moving forward.

To address these challenges, additional training could improve these interactions without introducing significant drawbacks. Additional training with a communications and customer service focus is being offered in Spring 2026, and the Department will continue to explore options for training that encourage the professional development of our inspection staff.

Recommended Actions

Temporary Assistance to Update and Enhance Communication Materials

Once statutes, rules, and guidance documents are updated, DACF could launch a communications campaign to raise awareness of the new regulations and tools. With additional resources, DACF could:

- Undertake a comprehensive review, rewrite, and redesign of all existing guidance documents and educational resources,
- Develop new illustrated guidance materials, and
- Provide recommendations for enhancing the Department's inspection program webpages to improve accessibility and navigability.

New and improved guidance documents on inspection pathways and regulatory requirements would better support the regulated community. Producers often seek technical assistance outside normal office hours, which highlights the importance of making the inspection webpage easy to navigate and accessible.

Securing funding for a consultant or temporary staff member to develop these materials would enable the Department to improve its ability to provide technical assistance without diverting inspectors from their core public health and inspection responsibilities. Additionally, a consultant or temporary staff member could provide an outside perspective to ensure that these materials are as clear, well-organized, and accessible as possible to producers and processors.

Permanent Technical Assistance Staff

We heard calls for additional technical assistance for producers. While technical assistance is provided during inspections, existing staff are largely at capacity with their primary responsibilities of ensuring public health through food safety compliance. Adding dedicated technical staff separate from inspection could provide the public with more consistent, accessible, and timely guidance. This approach could also help address regional disparities in access to technical assistance.

QAR's statutory mandate to ensure public health and DACF's broader objective of supporting the viability of food and farm businesses can be in tension with one another. Moreover, in many fields, it is considered best practice to segregate inspection and technical assistance services and to have those delivered by distinct entities. If granted additional staff, DACF would weigh the best location for such a technical assistance function within its organizational structure.



3. Insufficient Slaughter and Processing Capacity for Maine Producers

Challenges	Limitations	Possible Solutions
<p>Many producers must schedule a processing appointment at least six months in advance, with some needing to schedule a year in advance. More than half of the producer respondents report that the number of months' advance notice they need to book slaughter dates has increased over the last five years. Half of the producer respondents say their needs are not met when it comes to booking processing dates.</p> <p>Many producers must travel more than 30 miles to reach a processor, with some traveling more than 120 miles. More than half of the producer respondents say the driving distance does not meet their needs.</p>	<p><i>At the state level, Maine cannot:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand red meat or poultry processing capacity in ways that do not meet federal inspection requirements. Change USDA staffing levels or inspection availability. Reduce or override federal rules or standards governing inspection, sanitation, or facility design and construction. Establish businesses or dictate where they're located. 	<p><i>At the state level, Maine could:</i></p> <p>Provide grants, loans, or incentives for the construction or expansion of new or existing processing facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This reduces the cost of opening a new processing facility or of keeping a processing facility up to code as sanitation regulations change. Making funding available to processors allows more facilities to operate throughout the State, potentially reducing the distance to travel to a processor or the wait time for a processing appointment. <p>Provide grants, loans, or incentives for shared-use kitchens serving multiple producers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For red meat, once an animal is slaughtered at an inspected facility, the resulting carcass or half-carcass is legally considered an <i>inspected product</i>. Because of that, the cutting, trimming, further breaking down, and packaging of that inspected carcass can legally take place in a licensed commercial kitchen, not necessarily at the slaughterhouse. This is already allowed under current law. No federal inspection is required during cut-and-wrap operations if DACF licenses the establishment and the products are distributed in accordance with the Federal Meat Act. Maine can help communities or cooperatives establish kitchens equipped for meat processing (coolers, sinks, grinders, saws, tables, packaging machines, etc.). Some producers see this as a way to get reasonable access to red meat processing. <p>Expand training opportunities to encourage more people to get involved in the meat and poultry processing industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training more people to slaughter animals and process meat could help ensure that slaughterhouses have access to qualified staff.



Department Recommendations

Insufficient Slaughter and Processing Capacity for Maine Producers

Completed or In-Progress Actions

When permitted by the funding source, Maine has directed critical investments into slaughter and processing infrastructure. For example, of 64 grants totaling more than \$19 million made in 2022 with American Rescue Plan Act funds through Maine’s Agriculture Infrastructure Investment Program, 18 were made to meat producers and/or processors. This represented \$5.9 million in new investments into the sector. Separately in 2024, USDA offered one-time Local Meat Capacity Grants, which resulted in another two Maine meat processors receiving a total of just under half a million dollars. Between 2023 and 2024, federal funding further supported Maine’s meat and poultry processing sector through two primary channels. In March 2023, the USDA awarded \$8 million to CEI through the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP) to capitalize a revolving loan fund providing financing and technical assistance to regional processors. Separately, USDA Rural Development awarded competitive grants directly to individual processors, most notably a \$2.7 million grant for a planned USDA-inspected slaughter and processing facility in Unity, with an estimated annual operational capacity of nearly one million pounds of meat. In contrast, the USDA’s recent Resilient Food System Infrastructure grants, which were administered by DACF, specifically excluded meat and poultry processing from eligibility.

Recommended Actions

Feasibility Study

Pursuant to LD 493 in the 130th Legislature, DACF produced the report “Findings and Recommendations for Supporting Meat Slaughtering and Processing in Maine,” which can be found here: <https://legislature.maine.gov/documents/opla?aiiv%5Bdocuments.title%5D=meat&tt=documents>. The report recommended that the Legislature allocate funding “to support a Maine-specific feasibility study conducted by the University of Maine identifying the financial, physical, regulatory, and cultural barriers to increased red meat and poultry slaughter and processing in the state.” Although no such funding was made available at the time, DACF believes such a study would still be useful. A feasibility study could guide and help ensure the effectiveness of future slaughter and processing infrastructure investments made by the State.

Targeted Investment

Through targeted grants or financing, the State could help expand overall processing capacity, ease regional bottlenecks, and support community-based solutions, such as shared-use kitchens that improve local access to cut-and-wrap services. These investments would provide producers with more reliable and affordable options, while supporting a more resilient statewide processing system.

Many food and agriculture sectors could benefit from strategic investment. The Department’s Agriculture, Food, and Forest Products Infrastructure Investment Fund (AFFPIF) is an existing tool, though with limited funding at present, that could serve as the conduit for such investments. Additional state investment could potentially be structured to support new or expanded slaughter infrastructure that would measurably increase slaughter capacity. See Appendix H for an expanded description of public funding that has been invested into the meat and poultry processing industry to date.

Workforce Development

In January 2025, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development published “The State of Food and Beverage Processing in Maine,” which included a discussion of workforce challenges: “Labor shortages are prevalent across the state, especially in specialty areas like halal, aquaculture, *and meat processing* [emphasis added]. Workforce shortages are particularly challenging in less densely populated areas due to housing shortages,

lack of childcare and eldercare support, and transportation options. Building workforce pipelines and investing in workforce development is necessary to support the skilled labor demands of food markets.”

States including Ohio, Minnesota, and Delaware have looked to incarcerated individuals as one possible target population for skill development in meat and poultry processing (See Appendix H). The Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) already offers a robust suite of vocational and work-readiness programs, including a closely related topic: culinary arts, leading to ServSafe certification that verifies food safety knowledge for industry professionals. DACF and DOC have had previous exploratory and planning conversations regarding the potential development of a meat slaughter and cutting program at the Maine State Prison in Warren. DACF has supported DOC in efforts to secure federal funding for a training program, though such requests have not yet been granted.



4. High Barriers to Entry for Processors

Challenges	Limitations	Possible Solutions
<p>Some participants reported that the regulations and infrastructure requirements make it difficult for small or micro-scale poultry processors to enter or remain in the market. These respondents argue that some poultry regulations are not suited to Maine's scale.</p> <p>Processors state that requirements such as fully enclosed kill floors, multiple commercial-grade rooms, separate drainage and sinks, and significant septic capacity are prohibitively expensive to those processing small numbers of birds. Some maintain that the federal 20,000-poultry exemptions are administered in Maine more restrictively than federal rules require.</p> <p>Some processors report that insurance costs can be as big a barrier to profitability as equipment and labor costs. Meat processing is considered a "high-risk" industry due to the use of sharp equipment, potential risks to consumer health, and increased risk of employee injury.</p>	<p><i>At the state level, Maine cannot:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce or override federal rules or standards governing inspection, sanitation, or facility design. • Create shared facilities that bypass the federal requirement for continuous bird-by-bird inspection. • Redefine or relax federal exemptions or definitions. • Regulate the national insurance market or mandate federal insurance changes. • Force private insurers to cover processors at specific rates. • Eliminate liability requirements tied to federal inspection systems. 	<p><i>At the state level, Maine could:</i></p> <p>Ensure state-level regulatory burdens do not exceed those required by USDA.</p> <p>Ensure that relevant stakeholders are engaged in the conversation early in the rulemaking or policy development process, before most decisions or revisions have been made. Feedback could be solicited through focus groups and committees, as well as additional listening sessions and surveys.</p> <p>Provide grants, loans, or incentives specifically designed for micro-processors to help them enter or remain in the market. Funds may cover infrastructure costs, insurance riders, or access to training. These could be explored as eligible expense categories under new or existing DACF financial assistance programs.</p>



Department Recommendations High Barriers to Entry for Processors

Completed or In-Progress Actions

DACF has proposed major substantive rule changes to sanitation regulations for facilities operating under the fewer-than-1,000-bird poultry exemption (<1K poultry exemption) in the second session of the 132nd Legislature. If passed, these regulations will provide operators in this category a better understanding of what is required for adequate sanitation to produce a safe product. QAR has also developed an accompanying Best Management Practices guidance document for <1K poultry exemption operators who seek additional guidance on starting and maintaining a safe food processing operation. It is available on the QAR website at www.maine.gov/dacf/mmpi

Recommended Actions

Many of the challenges identified under *High Barriers to Entry for Processors* overlap with those discussed in *Insufficient Slaughter and Processing Capacity for Maine Producers*, including limited access to facilities and infrastructure that can accommodate small or emerging operations. While the previous section focuses on increasing overall processing capacity, this theme emphasizes helping new processors overcome barriers to entry by providing the resources, technical assistance, and financial support necessary to launch and sustain their operations.

The Department recommends that eligibility requirements for existing (e.g., AFFPIF, Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund) and future funding programs have some capacity to include start-up processors and microprocessors, or that a special round of funding be considered for start-ups. This approach complements broader efforts to expand statewide processing capacity while addressing the unique needs of emerging poultry businesses.

The Department recommends a feasibility study to “identifying the financial, physical, regulatory, and cultural barriers to increased red meat and poultry slaughter and processing in the state” as described in the 2021 “Findings and Recommendations for Supporting Meat Slaughtering and Processing in Maine.”

Actions Not Recommended

Some survey respondents stated that, in some instances, State standards exceeded those required by Federal law. Although we acknowledge that this is a perception that exists, we cannot identify or are not aware of any instance where this is actually the case. It is worth repeating that all existing standards—including facility design, equipment sanitation, food contact surfaces, water quality, and personal hygiene—are formulated to ensure sanitary conditions. Periodic inspections and licensing oversight further support compliance, reducing the risk of contamination and protecting consumers from foodborne illness.

A reoccurring request is for Maine to allow custom-exempt or retail-exempt operations to sell their products as “inspected.” **This would conflict with federal law.** By definition, exempt facilities are not subject to continuous inspection and may sell products only through limited, defined channels. Allowing these operations to bypass inspection requirements would result in the USDA withdrawing Cooperative Agreements that allow Maine to operate its state inspection program, undermining both consumer protections and market access.

Maintaining Maine’s standards also strengthens confidence in products originating from the State. Meeting or exceeding federal expectations reassures buyers of the safety, quality, and consistency of Maine products, protecting market access, supporting interstate commerce, and reinforcing Maine’s reputation for rigorous food safety oversight.

V. Conclusions

The findings presented in this report focused on updating Maine's meat and poultry regulatory framework, strengthening technical support systems, and expanding infrastructure capacity while maintaining the State's core commitment to public health and food safety. Throughout the past several months, DACF has not waited for this report to be complete to begin to make meaningful changes and improvements. These include proposed rule revisions, enhanced training initiatives, improved communication systems, and expanded guidance resources, which will help address concerns raised by the regulated community. These efforts aim to clarify regulatory expectations, improve accessibility of information, and ensure that both inspectors and processors operate with a shared understanding of food safety standards.

The report's recommended legislative and programmatic actions build on this foundation. DACF's proposed statutory clarifications and opportunities to expand communications capacity and dedicated technical assistance staffing would further support consistent compliance and strengthen relationships between regulators and industry participants. Further, strategic investments in processing infrastructure, feasibility analysis, and workforce development represent opportunities to address systemic capacity constraints while promoting long-term sector resilience. Importantly, these recommendations recognize the need to balance regulatory rigor with accessibility, particularly for small and emerging processors, through phased implementation, flexible training pathways, and targeted financial support.

The report also underscores the importance of maintaining Maine's alignment with federal inspection standards. Preserving these standards safeguards consumer protection, protects interstate market access, and sustains confidence in Maine products. Proposals that would weaken inspection integrity or conflict with federal requirements would jeopardize these protections and are therefore not recommended.

The Legislature has already acted by adopting the Department's proposed major substantive rulemaking for the Chapter 348 rules (Appendix E). The following recommendations will require additional legislative action, additional resources, or both to be implemented:

- Legislative updates to 22 M.R.S.A. ch. 562-A, Preparation of Livestock Poultry Products for Human Consumption. The Department has attached recommended statutory language to this report in Appendix F.
- Support for funding for additional staff, separate from the inspections staff, dedicated to providing training and technical assistance to meat and poultry processors seeking to obtain or maintain registration and licensure.
- Support for one-time funding for a comprehensive, third-party review of all training and guidance documents to ensure maximum clarity and accessibility.
- Ongoing investment in expanded meat and poultry processing infrastructure.

Taken together, the actions described in this report outline a pragmatic path forward: one that updates regulation, strengthens technical capacity, expands infrastructure, and supports workforce development without compromising public health. Continued collaboration among the Legislature, DACF, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders will be essential to effectively implement these measures. With deliberate investment and sustained coordination, Maine can reinforce a regulatory environment that protects consumers, supports producers and processors, and promotes a resilient and competitive food system.

VI. Supplemental Information

Report Resources

The Appendix contains several resources to aid in reviewing the State’s meat and poultry inspection programs. Appendices B, C, and D contain the online survey results separated by producer questions, processor questions, and questions asked to both producers and processors.

Additionally and linked [here](#) is a January 2022 report that the Department submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (ACF Committee) in response to L.D. 493, *An Act to Allow Custom Slaughterhouses to Produce Cuts of Meat to Be Sold Commercially in the State* and a request from the ACF Committee to “convene a working group ... to discuss the many issues surrounding custom slaughterhouses.” Section V below (*Maine’s Meat and Poultry Processing Landscape and State Inspection Capacity*) was adapted from this report and updated with recent data. Additionally, the January 2022 report gives an overview of meat and poultry processing infrastructure, funding, and training needs.

Facility Type / Threshold	MMPI Oversight	CFI Oversight	Notes / Purpose
State-inspected slaughterhouses	Daily inspections, CIS certification, compliance with meat/poultry rules	Only if the facility also operates a commercial kitchen or other non-slaughter food operations	MMPI is primary; CFI applies only to additional food activities
Custom slaughterhouses (<20K birds not processed for sale)	Annual inspections for exemption compliance and recordkeeping	None	MMPI registers and inspects these facilities
Poultry producers under 1,000-bird exemption	Registration, exemption compliance	Minimal to none, unless a licensed commercial kitchen is used	MMPI monitors poultry-specific rules; CFI usually not involved
Poultry producers under <20K exemption (Grower-Producer or Small Enterprise)	Provides oversight to ensure producers meet federal and state poultry exemption statutes.	Licenses commercial kitchen, conducts routine sanitation inspections	MMPI provides oversight of exemption requirements, but CFI provides all sanitation and facility inspection.
Commercial kitchens/food processors not handling exempt poultry	None	Routine inspections, licensing, and enforcement under ch. 343 and ch. 331	CFI ensures food safety and sanitation
Hybrid facilities (e.g., processing poultry + other foods)	Exemption compliance, poultry-specific rules	Routine inspections of overall facility sanitation and food safety	Both programs coordinate to cover their respective areas

Listening Session & Survey Feedback Engagement Strategy

Outreach for the listening sessions and the online survey was intentionally designed to engage Maine meat and poultry producers and processors.

Table 1. Survey and Listening Session Dates and Participation

What	When	Where	Participants
In-person Listening Session	August 27, 2025	Windsor Fair	2 producers & processors; 7 listening in/didn't participate (9 total).
Virtual Listening Sessions (2)	October 30 & 31, 2025	Zoom	3 producers & processors; 3 listening in/ didn't participate (6 total).
Survey	Open October 16, 2025 – November 2, 2025.	Online	35 anonymous responses.

The survey and online listening session registration information was sent through the Department's email delivery service (GovDelivery) to 4,780 email addresses comprised of distribution groups in the following categories:

- Maine Business Outreach & Networking News
- Maine Hunters for the Hungry Approved Processors
- LD 1198 Survey (Stakeholders List)
- Meat and Poultry Processors
- Open Farm Day Participants
- Agriculture Resources for Towns
- Farm to Institution
- Farmer Resources
- Maine Agricultural Service Providers
- Processors
- Real Maine Members
- Senior Farm Share - Participating Farmers

Additionally, the survey and online listening session registration information was distributed by the University of Maine Extension to agricultural service providers, who were also captured in the list above.



Overview of Feedback Results

Listening Session Participants

Three people representing Maine meat and poultry producers and processors participated in the virtual listening sessions. An additional three people attended the virtual listening sessions to learn and listen in, but did not participate in the discussion. Nine people attended the in-person listening session, but only two people representing Maine meat and poultry producers and processors participated in the discussion.

Survey Participant Characteristics

Thirty-five anonymous participants responded to the online survey. Twenty were livestock/poultry producers, three were livestock/poultry processors, and twelve were both producers and processors (**Figure 2**). Among all survey participants, the most commonly raised and slaughtered livestock species was poultry, while the least common was goats (**Figure 3**).

Figure 2. Which option best describes your operation?

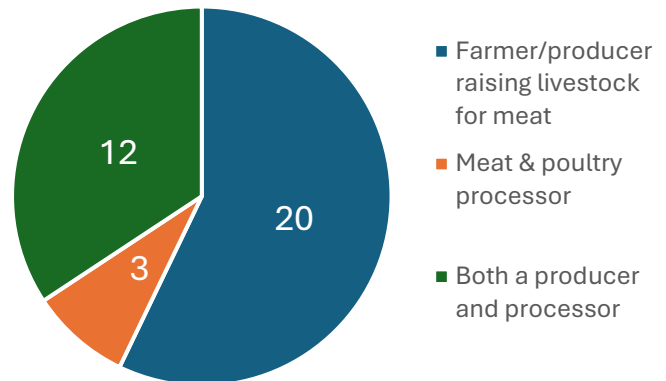
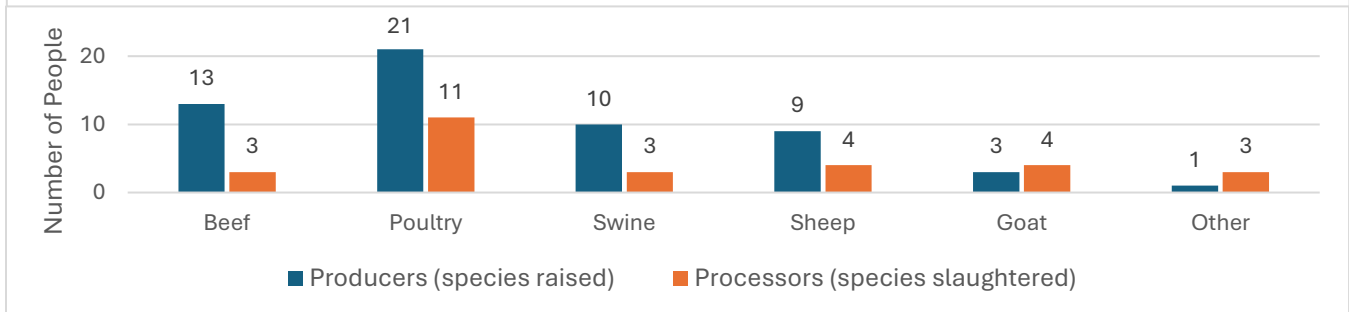


Figure 3. Producers: What type of species do you raise?
Processors: What type of species do you slaughter?



Processing Inspection and Exemption Types

To frame the survey, we asked survey participants to indicate which inspection or exemption type they have animals processed under. Of the 35 survey respondents, 27 producers⁵ and 14 processors⁶ answered this question. Most producers reported having their livestock processed at USDA-inspected or state-inspected facilities (**Figure 4**). Most processors reported slaughtering livestock and poultry under the poultry exemption (fewer than 1,000 birds) and the custom exemption (**Figure 5**).

⁵ While there were 32 respondents who fell into the category of producers, only 27 of them answered this question. This data incorporates responses from producers only, as well as participants who are both producers and processors. Additionally, the responses do not total 27, as some producers have their animals processed under multiple exemptions or at different facilities.

⁶ While there were 15 respondents who fell into the category of processors, only 14 of them answered this question. This data incorporates responses from processors only, as well as participants who are both producers and processors. Additionally, the responses do not total 14, as some processors may have multiple exemption or inspection types.

Thirteen of the producers indicated that they are satisfied with the type(s) of processing/slaughtering facilities they have access to, and 14 would like to use other facility types. Half of the processors (7) indicated that they were looking into adding or changing the type of license or registration they have

Of the 14 producers who indicated they would like to use other processing facility types:

<p>5 would like to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ USDA-inspected facilities➤ Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) inspection facilities	<p>3 would like to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Custom exempt facilities➤ State-inspected facilities➤ Facilities with the <1,000 birds poultry exemption	<p>2 would like to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Facilities with the <20,000 birds poultry Grower Producer exemption➤ Facilities with the <20,000 birds poultry Small Enterprise exemption
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Of the 7 processors who indicated they were looking into adding or changing the type of license or registration they have:

<p>5 would like to apply for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The <20,000 birds poultry Grower Producer exemption	<p>3 would like to apply for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) inspection
<p>2 would like to apply for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ USDA inspection	<p>1 would like to apply for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ State inspection➤ The <20,000 birds poultry Small Enterprise exemption

Table 2. Acronyms and Abbreviations in Figures 3 and 4

GP	< 20,000 birds poultry grower producer exemption	USDA	USDA Inspection
MMPI	State inspection (ME Meat & Poultry Inspection Program)	CE	Custom exemption
CIS	Cooperative Interstate Shipment inspection	NA	No license or exemption
1k bird	< 1,000 birds poultry exemption	UNK	I don't know
SE	< 20,000 birds poultry small enterprise exemption	Other	Retail exempt

Figure 4. Producers: Under what inspection or exemption type are your livestock processed?

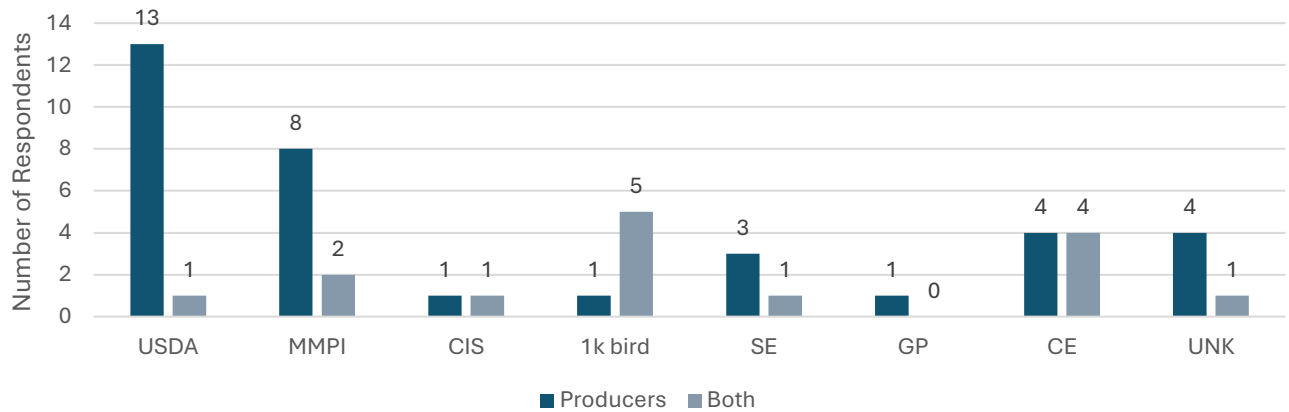
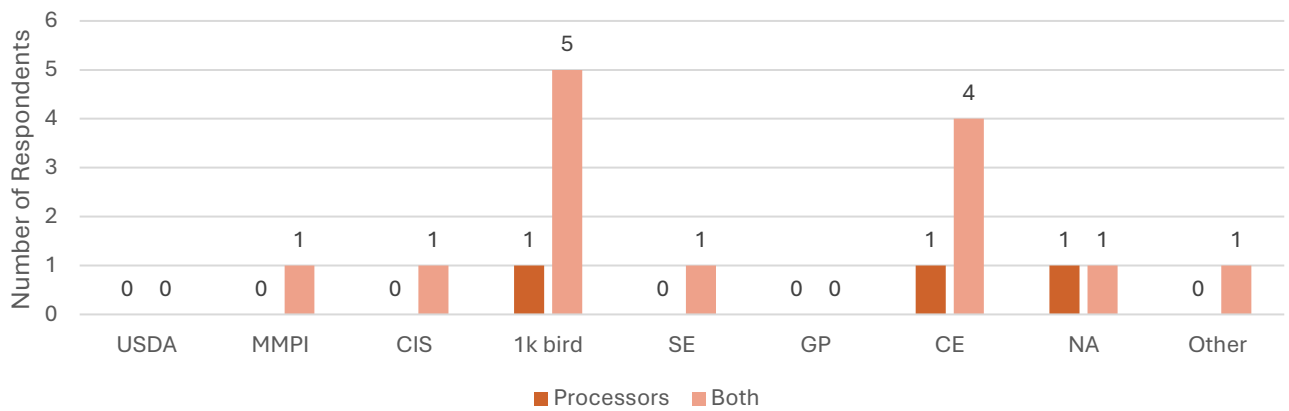


Figure 5. Processors: Under what inspection or exemption type do you process livestock?



Summary of Respondent Views on DACF Programs

Below is a summary of responses received regarding DACF programs. These are presented with the caveat that a low number of responses to any individual question may make it difficult to draw conclusions.

Survey participants⁷ were asked about their satisfaction with DACF programs. 73% of respondents (8 of 11) reported being extremely or somewhat satisfied with the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection/Licensing program (MMPI program). The remaining 27% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the MMPI program. No respondents reported being dissatisfied with MMPI.

Regarding the Consumer Products Inspection/Licensing Program (CFI program), 50% (2 of 4) reported being extremely or somewhat satisfied with the CFI program, and 50% (2 of 4 respondents) stated they were “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” with the CFI program. Again, no respondents reported being dissatisfied.

Overall, none of the survey participants⁸ reported being dissatisfied with the MMPI or CFI Programs.

Since processors have the most direct interaction with inspectors, they were asked several questions about their satisfaction with DACF inspectors. Among the processor survey respondents who indicated that their inspector is their primary source of information about regulatory changes, all reported being either “extremely satisfied” (4 out of 5 respondents or 80%) or “somewhat satisfied” (1 out of 5 respondents or 20%) with their interactions. Additionally, all processor respondents who reported their inspector as their main source of information on best practices in processing meat and poultry stated that they were “extremely satisfied” (6 out of 6 respondents or 100%) with their interactions.

Next, processors who had registered or licensed a slaughter facility in the last five years were asked specifically about their experiences with the MMPI program. The majority of survey respondents agreed that the DACF licensing and inspection staff are courteous, helpful, knowledgeable about food safety, and effective at maintaining food safety (**Figure 5**). Survey respondents couldn’t always see the food safety implications of some requirements and found them to be more bureaucratic.

Contrastingly, participants from the in-person listening session stated that sometimes regulators from both programs talk down to farmers during inspections, making them feel intimidated. They also described feeling as if inspectors were trying to catch them in a ‘gotcha’ moment to impose fines for infractions, rather than focusing on education and guidance.

The virtual listening session participants didn’t make any explicit statements of intimidation, rudeness, or disrespect from inspectors, but expressed frustration with regulations being interpreted differently by different inspectors. The in-person listening session participants also stated that inspectors sometimes interpret regulations differently.

⁷ Processors, producers, and those who are both processors and producers.

⁸ Processors, producers, and those who are both processors and producers.

Figure 5. Processors: What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Strongly agree
 ■ I don't know

MAKING MEAT PROCESSORS JUMP THROUGH HOOPS SEEMS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD SAFETY TO THE MMPI PROGRAM



THE LICENSING AND INSPECTION STAFF I INTERACT WITH AT THE DACF ARE NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT FOOD SAFETY



THE MMPI PROGRAM IS EFFECTIVE AT MAINTAINING THE FOOD SAFETY OF THE MEAT PROCESSED IN MAINE



THE LICENSING AND INSPECTION STAFF I INTERACT WITH AT THE DACF ARE HELPFUL TO ME IN COMPLYING WITH FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS



THE LICENSING AND INSPECTION STAFF I INTERACT WITH AT THE DACF ARE COURTEOUS.

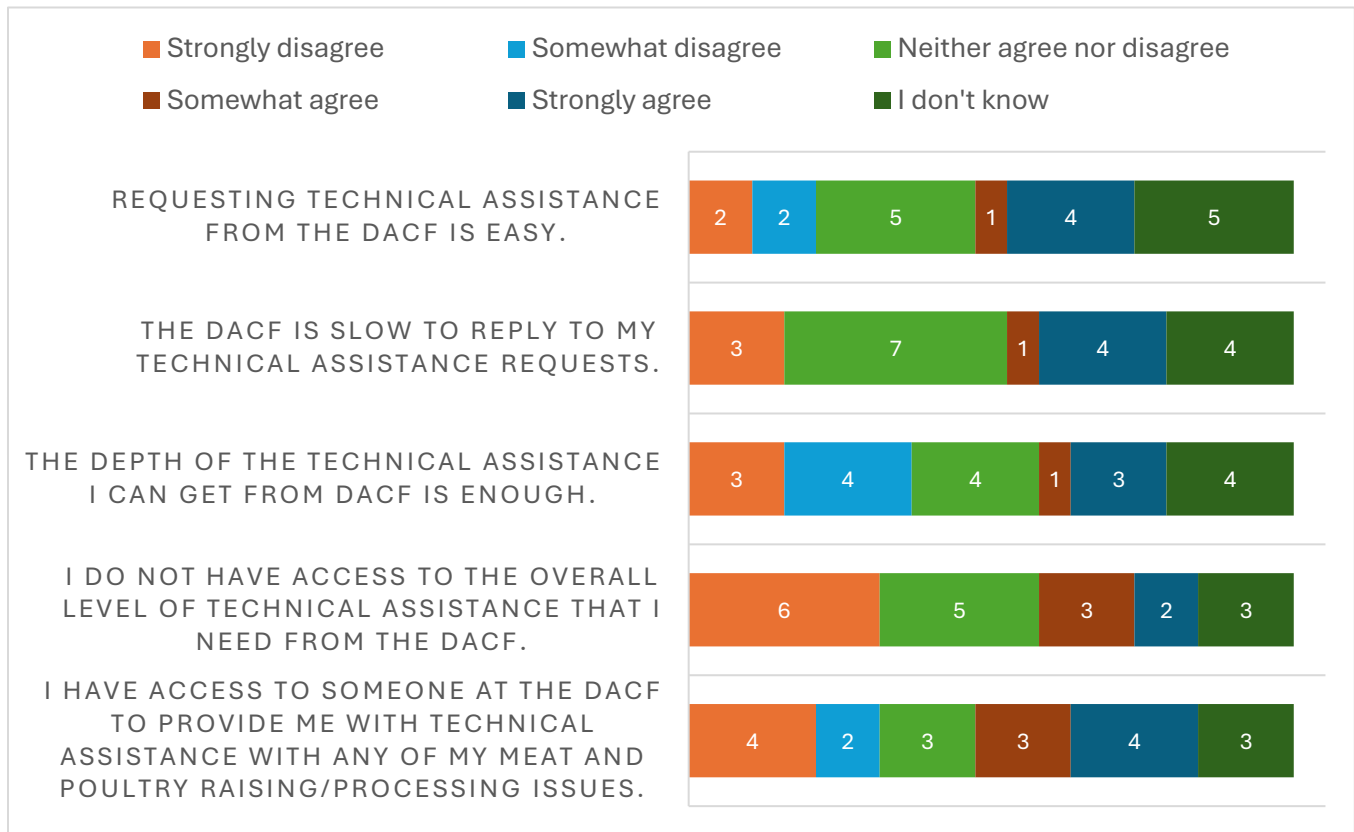


Across the 35 survey participants, 2 in-person listening session participants, and 3 online listening session participants, **respondents leaned more satisfied than dissatisfied. Nevertheless, there was significant sentiment on both sides of that question, and DACF acknowledges there is room for improvement.** DACF intends to readminister the survey in future years to track progress.



Views on Regulations, Resources, and Technical Assistance

All survey participants⁹ were asked about their views on DACF resources and technical assistance (**Figure 6**).



Of the 19 respondents who answered the survey questions shown in Figure 6, reviews were mixed on whether DACF is doing enough to provide technical assistance to producers and processors.

Processors who had registered or licensed a slaughter facility in the last five years were asked about their views on meat and poultry licensing regulations, DACF resources, and technical assistance. Survey respondents had mixed reviews on whether the DACF meat and poultry guidance documents are easy or difficult to understand.

- “The meat and poultry guidance documents on the DACF's website are difficult to understand.”
 - 37.5% (3 of 8 respondents) stated they “somewhat disagree,”
 - 25% (2 of 8 respondents) stated they “strongly agree,”
 - 25% (2 of 8 respondents) stated they “neither agree nor disagree,” and
 - 12.5% (1 of 8 respondents) stated they “somewhat agree” with that statement.

The majority of the processor survey participants¹⁰ (7 of 8 participants) agreed that the meat and poultry licensing regulations in the State of Maine are straightforward and easy to understand.

⁹ Processors, producers, and those who are both processors and producers.

¹⁰ Processors and those who are both processors and producers.

Outreach & Feedback Limitations

Outreach

Survey and listening session information was sent to 4,780 email addresses via the Department's GovDelivery service. There is likely overlap in additional email outreach, as UMaine Extension staff were also requested to send the information to their distribution groups.

Three listening sessions were held on the following dates and times:

- August 27, 2025, In-Person Listening Session, Windsor Fair, 5:00-6:00 p.m.
- October 30, 2025, Online Listening Session, Zoom, 3:00-4:00 p.m.
- October 31, 2025, Online Listening Session, Zoom, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

To encourage attendance, participants were offered free entry to the Windsor Fair to attend the listening session. The online listening sessions were free to attend via Zoom. Those who were unable to attend the listening sessions but wanted to provide feedback could do so through the online survey, which was open from October 16, 2025, to November 2, 2025. This approach was designed to be accessible to as many people as possible by incorporating these variations:

- Offered both in-person and online options.
- Scheduled sessions on different weekdays.
- Held meetings at different times of day.
- Gathered input in both summer and fall.
- Sent outreach through multiple distribution lists.

However, people may have certain limitations that could have prevented them from submitting feedback, such as:

- May have limited or no access to transportation to attend the Windsor Fair.
- May have been too far from the Windsor Fair to attend.
- May have limited or no access to the internet, a computer, or Zoom.
- May not have English as a first language

While modern technology and communication methods can help expand the reach of information and services, they may not be easily accessible or intuitive for all members of the agricultural community, creating barriers for farmers who lack reliable internet access, digital literacy, or familiarity with newer platforms.

Anonymity

UMaine Extension staff conducted the online survey and facilitated the two online listening sessions. InCommon Group staff facilitated the in-person listening session at the Windsor Fair. UMaine Extension staff anonymized the survey data before providing it to DACF. Additionally, DACF staff from a different division than QAR attended the listening sessions, took notes, and anonymized the notes. No geographic locations, identities, or other demographic information were collected on participants.

The GovDelivery announcement highlighted the survey's anonymity to encourage candid participation and help participants feel comfortable sharing their authentic experiences. During the listening sessions, participants were reminded that the survey was anonymous and that their names would not be recorded in the notes taken during the session. Despite these safeguards designed to protect confidentiality and foster open dialogue, some participants may still have felt hesitant to share critical views out of concern that their feedback could be attributed to them or relayed to MMPI staff.

Response Duplication

Participants were encouraged to attend a listening session and also complete the survey, so some individuals may be represented in both datasets. As a result, some overlap is expected between qualitative and quantitative responses.

Additionally, individuals who identified as both producers and processors were included in analyses for both groups when appropriate. For example, in Figures 3 and 4, respondents who raise animals and also process some species themselves contributed feedback from both perspectives. This does not necessarily reflect duplicated answers. A respondent may process one species under a small-scale exemption (e.g., raising chickens and processing them under the <1,000-bird poultry exemption) while sending a different species to a USDA-inspected facility (e.g., raising pigs processed at a USDA plant). In these cases, the individual provided distinct information about two different roles within the meat and poultry system.

Survey Completion & Representation

The online survey received responses from 35 participants, of which:

- 12 completed 100% of the survey,
- 7 completed 90-99% of the survey,
- 3 completed 80-89% of the survey,
- 4 completed 70-79% of the survey, and
- 9 completed less than 70% of the survey.

Overall, approximately 19 participants provided the most survey data, comprising 11 producers, 1 processor, and 7 who were both producers and processors. The listening sessions only recorded the number of attendees, and not whether they were producers or processors. Because the survey was anonymous and did not collect geographic information, it is unclear whether all regions and counties of Maine were represented among respondents.

The survey data indicated a lack of participation from processors under USDA inspection or the Grower-Producer exemption (**Figure 4**), despite the fact that the majority of producer participants have their animals processed under USDA inspection (**Figure 3**). Of the other licensing and inspection categories where we received participation feedback, the sample sizes are small, averaging two participants per category.

Appendix A:

Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Assess Its Current Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs

APPROVED	CHAPTER
MAY 30, 2025	41
BY GOVERNOR	RESOLVES

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

S.P. 487 - L.D. 1198

Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Assess Its Current Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, Maine's meat and poultry inspection programs exist to protect the health and welfare of consumers by ensuring that livestock and poultry used in the production of meat and poultry products, respectively, are humanely handled and disease-free and the resulting products are wholesome, not adulterated and correctly labeled and packaged; and

Whereas, this legislation must take effect before the expiration of the 90-day period to allow the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to begin its review of Maine's meat and poultry inspection programs as soon as possible; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Meat and poultry inspection study. Resolved: That, within existing budgeted resources, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall conduct a review of programs and processes related to meat and poultry inspections, including processes related to exemptions from inspections, to determine areas for possible improvements, efficiencies and enhanced flexibility to benefit agricultural producers, processors and retail and public customers. In conducting the review under this section, the department shall consult with livestock and poultry producers and processors, the United States Department of Agriculture, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and other stakeholders that the department determines necessary to assess existing programs' statutory authorities, rules, regulations, policies and practices, including those involving investigations, enforcement and staff training. As part of the review under this section, the department shall conduct a survey of meat and poultry producers and processors to obtain feedback on rules, regulations, policies and practices affecting the regulated community. The department shall also review the existing exemptions that relate to poultry processors that process certain numbers of poultry per year and the department's

existing cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service and that agreement's related requirements. The department shall develop strategies to ensure uniform interpretation of the United States Department of Agriculture's regulations and exemptions.

Sec. 2. Report. Resolved: That, by January 15, 2026, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall submit a report based on its review in section 1 describing strategies, findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry may submit legislation related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

Appendix B: Survey Responses from Producers

Please indicate the species you raise. <i>Select all that apply.</i>	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	20	12	32
Beef	9	4	13
Poultry	11	10	21
Swine	4	6	10
Sheep	8	1	9
Goat	1	2	3
Other	1	0	1

Please indicate the type of processing/slaughter you currently use for the animals you raise. <i>Select all that apply</i>	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	16	11	27
Custom exempt	4	4	8
State Inspected (acceptable for sale within Maine)	8	2	10
State Inspected, Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) (acceptable for interstate sales)	1	1	2
USDA Inspected	13	1	14
Poultry exemption, 1,000 birds	1	5	6
Poultry exemption, 20,000 birds, Small Enterprise	3	1	4
Poultry exemption, 20,000 birds, Grower Producer	1	0	1
I don't know / other	4	1	5

Would you like to use other facility types (processing/slaughter) for your operation, different from the ones you already use?	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	16	11	27
No, I am satisfied with the type(s) of facilities I have access to	8	5	13
Yes	8	6	14

What type of facility would you like to use? <i>Select all that apply</i>	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	8	6	14
Custom exempt	2	1	3
State Inspected (acceptable for sale within Maine)	1	2	3
State Inspected, Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) (acceptable for interstate sales)	3	2	5
USDA Inspected	3	2	5
Poultry, 1,000 bird exemption	2	1	3
Poultry, 20,000 bird Small Enterprise exemption	1	1	2
Poultry, 20,000 bird Grower Producer exemption	2	0	2

How and where do you currently sell your meat products? Check all that apply.	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	15	11	26
Farmer's markets	8	6	14
On-farm store	11	8	19
Retail accounts	3	5	8
Wholesale	4	3	7
Institutional accounts	1	1	2
Custom only	0	2	2
Not sold	1	0	1

Please select other outlets you are currently not using but would like to access in the future. Check all that apply.	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	15	11	26
Farmer's markets	0	3	3
On-farm store	2	2	4
Retail accounts	5	3	8
Wholesale	4	2	6
Institutional accounts	0	1	1
I am satisfied with the outlets I use, and I do not plan to expand them.	8	5	13

You indicated in the previous question that you would like to use outlets that you are not currently using. If you're not selling products a certain way but would like to, please tell us why. Please select all that apply.	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	7	6	13
Access to further processing	3	2	5
Access to slaughter	4	3	7
Access to markets	2	1	3
Lack of volume	3	2	5
Can't meet pricing requirements	1	1	2
Financial concerns	0	1	1
Lack of experience or technical assistance/support	1	0	1
Lack of labor	0	1	1
Slaughter availability	1	0	1

Approximately how many of each species do you raise in a typical year?				For each of the species you raise, how far do you travel to your slaughter facility?					
		Producer	Both	Total			Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	9	3	12	Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10
	1-10 cows	5	2	7		0 miles per trip	0	0	0
	11-20 cows	1	1	2		1-30 miles per trip	1	0	1
	21-30 cows	2	0	2		31-60 miles per trip	0	2	2
	31-40 cows	1	0	1		61-90 miles per trip	3	0	3
	>40 cows	0	0	0		91-120 miles per trip	2	0	2
Poultry	Number of responders	9	10	19	Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15
	1-100 birds	7	1	8		0 miles per trip	0	7	7
	101-300 birds	2	5	7		1-30 miles per trip	1	0	1
	301-500 birds	0	0	0		31-60 miles per trip	1	1	2
	501-700 birds	0	1	1		61-90 miles per trip	2	0	2
	701-900 birds	0	0	0		91-120 miles per trip	1	2	3
	901-1100 birds	0	2	2		>120 miles per trip	0	0	0
	>1100 birds	0	1	1					
Swine	Number of responders	4	6	10	Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9
	1-10 pigs	1	3	4		0 miles per trip	0	2	2
	11-20 pigs	2	2	4		1-30 miles per trip	1	0	1
	21-30 pigs	1	1	2		31-60 miles per trip	0	2	2
	31-40 pigs	0	0	0		61-90 miles per trip	1	0	1
	>40 pigs	0	0	0		91-120 miles per trip	0	1	1
Sheep	Number of responders	6	1	7	Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6
	1-10 sheep	2	0	2		0 miles per trip	0	0	0
	11-20 sheep	1	0	1		1-30 miles per trip	3	0	3
	21-30 sheep	2	0	2		31-60 miles per trip	0	1	1
	31-40 sheep	0	0	0		61-90 miles per trip	0	0	0
	>40 sheep	1	1	2		91-120 miles per trip	0	0	0
Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2	Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2
	1-10 goats	0	2	2		0 miles per trip	0	0	0
	11-20 goats	0	0	0		1-30 miles per trip	0	0	0
	21-30 goats	0	0	0		31-60 miles per trip	0	0	0
	31-40 goats	0	0	0		61-90 miles per trip	0	0	0
	>40 goats	0	0	0		91-120 miles per trip	0	1	1
Total # of responders ^{11, 12}		13	11	24	Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24
						0 miles per trip	0	9	9
						1-30 miles per trip	6	0	6
						31-60 miles per trip	1	6	7
						61-90 miles per trip	6	0	6
						91-120 miles per trip	2	1	3

¹¹ This table does not include a "Total" row because of the wide variation in animal counts between livestock and poultry categories.

For each of the species you raise, how many trips per year do you travel to your slaughter facility?					In the last 5 years, has the distance that you have to drive per round trip to access a slaughter facility changed?				
		Producer	Both	Total			Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10	Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10
	0 trips	0	0	0		Decreased distance	1	0	1
	1-10 trips	4	3	7		Distance has not changed	5	3	8
	11-20 trips	1	0	1		Increased distance	1	0	1
	21-30 trips	2	0	2					
Poultry	Number of responders	5	9	14	Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15
	0 trips	0	5	5		Decreased distance	0	0	0
	1-10 trips	5	4	9		Distance has not changed	5	9	14
	11-20 trips	0	0	0		Increased distance	0	1	1
	21-30 trips	0	0	0					
Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9	Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9
	0 trips	0	2	2		Decreased distance	0	0	0
	1-10 trips	2	3	5		Distance has not changed	3	6	9
	11-20 trips	1	1	2		Increased distance	0	0	0
	21-30 trips	0	0	0					
Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6	Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6
	0 trips	0	0	0		Decreased distance	0	0	0
	1-10 trips	4	1	5		Distance has not changed	4	1	5
	11-20 trips	1	0	1		Increased distance	1	0	1
	21-30 trips	0	0	0					
Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2	Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2
	0 trips	0	0	0		Decreased distance	0	0	0
	1-10 trips	0	2	2		Distance has not changed	0	2	2
	11-20 trips	0	0	0		Increased distance	0	0	0
	21-30 trips	0	0	0					
Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24	Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24
	0 trips	0	7	7		Decreased distance	1	0	1
	1-10 trips	15	13	28		Distance has not changed	17	21	38
	11-20 trips	3	1	4		Increased distance	2	1	3
	21-30 trips	2	0	2					

¹² The "Total" category reflects the sum of responses across all animal categories. However, the "Total number of responders" counts each individual only once. Example: A person who raises both sheep and cattle may submit two responses, but they are counted as a single responder in the "Total number of responders" row.

In the last 5 years, has the number of months in advance you need to book slaughter dates changed?					How many months in advance have you had to book a slaughter date for each of your species in the last year?				
		Producer	Both	Total			Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10	Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10
	Decreased # of months	0	0	0		0-5 months	1	0	1
	# of months hasn't changed	2	2	4		6-11 months	3	1	4
	Increased # of months	5	1	6		12-18 months	3	2	5
Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15	Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15
	Decreased # of months	0	1	1		0-5 months	1	9	10
	# of months hasn't changed	0	7	7		6-11 months	2	0	2
	Increased # of months	5	2	7		12-18 months	2	1	3
Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9	Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9
	Decreased # of months	0	0	0		0-5 months	0	2	2
	# of months hasn't changed	0	4	4		6-11 months	1	2	3
	Increased # of months	3	2	5		12-18 months	2	2	4
Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6	Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6
	Decreased # of months	0	0	0		0-5 months	1	0	1
	# of months hasn't changed	2	1	3		6-11 months	1	0	1
	Increased # of months	3	0	3		12-18 months	3	1	4
Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2	Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2
	Decreased # of months	0	0	0		0-5 months	0	1	1
	# of months hasn't changed	0	0	0		6-11 months	0	1	1
	Increased # of months	0	2	2		12-18 months	0	0	0
Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24	Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24
	Decreased # months	0	1	1		0-5 months	3	12	15
	# of months hasn't changed	4	14	18		6-11 months	7	4	11
	Increased # months	16	7	23		12-18 months	10	6	16

Are your needs being met in the areas highlighted below for each of the species you raise?

Type of License					Driving Distance				
		Producer	Both	Total			Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10	Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10
	Yes	5	3	8		Yes	2	2	4
	No	2	0	2		No	5	1	6
Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15	Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15
	Yes	4	7	11		Yes	1	8	9
	No	1	3	4		No	4	2	6
Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9	Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9
	Yes	1	4	5		Yes	1	4	5
	No	2	2	4		No	2	2	4
Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6	Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6
	Yes	3	1	4		Yes	3	1	4
	No	2	0	2		No	2	0	2
Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2	Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2
	Yes	0	1	1		Yes	0	0	0
	No	0	1	1		No	0	2	2
Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24	Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24
	Yes	13	16	29		Yes	7	15	22
	No	7	6	13		No	13	7	20

Booking Dates in Advance				
		Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	7	3	10
	Yes	0	2	2
	No	7	1	8
Poultry	Number of responders	5	10	15
	Yes	2	8	10
	No	3	2	5
Swine	Number of responders	3	6	9
	Yes	1	5	6
	No	2	1	3
Sheep	Number of responders	5	1	6
	Yes	1	1	2
	No	4	0	4
Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2
	Yes	0	1	1
	No	0	1	1
Total	Total # of responders ¹²	13	11	24
	Yes	4	17	21
	No	16	5	21

You indicated that your needs are not being met in at least one area for at least one of the species you raise. If you had access to a level of meat processing that better met your business's needs, what would you do?	Producer	Both	Total
Number of responders	11	5	16
Have greater income opportunities	8	4	12
Expand the markets I sell in	6	4	10
Sell more in my current markets	6	4	10
Be able to negotiate processing fees better (i.e., processor competition)	5	2	7
Raise more animals	6	5	11

Please estimate the additional number of animals you would raise if your needs were met.									
		Producer	Both	Total			Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	7	2	9	Sheep	Number of responders	4	0	4
	0 cows	3	0	3		0 sheep	1	0	1
	1-10 cows	1	2	3		1-10 sheep	1	0	1
	11-20 cows	2	0	2		11-20 sheep	0	0	0
	21-30 cows	1	0	1		21-30 sheep	0	0	0
	31-40 cows	0	0	0		31-40 sheep	0	0	0
	>40 cows	0	0	0		41-100 sheep	1	0	1
Poultry	Number of responders	4	5	9	101-200 sheep	0	0	0	
	0 birds	0	1	1	201-300 sheep	1	0	1	
	1-100 birds	2	0	2	Number of responders	0	2	2	
	101-300 birds	1	0	1	0 goats	0	1	1	
	301-500 birds	1	1	2	1-10 goats	0	0	0	
	501-700 birds	0	0	0	11-20 goats	0	1	1	
	701-900 birds	0	0	0	21-30 goats	0	0	0	
	901-1100 birds	0	1	1	31-40 goats	0	0	0	
	>1100 birds	0	2	2	>40 goats	0	0	0	
Swine	Number of responders	3	3	6	Total	Total number of responders	11	5	16
	0 pigs	1	0	1		Number of responders who would not raise more animals	2	0	2
	1-10 pigs	1	1	2		Number of responders who would raise more animals	9	5	14
	11-20 pigs	0	1	1					
	21-30 pigs	1	0	1					
	31-40 pigs	0	1	1					
	>40 pigs	0	0	0					

Please estimate the additional potential income for each species if your needs were met.

		Producer	Both	Total			Producer	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	5	2	6	Sheep	Number of responders	3	0	3
	\$0	1	0	1		\$0	0	0	0
	\$1-\$1,000	0	0	0		\$1-\$1,000	0	0	0
	\$1,001-\$2,500	0	0	0		\$1,001-\$2,500	0	0	0
	\$2,501-\$5,000	2	1	3		\$2,501-\$5,000	1	0	1
	\$5,001-\$15,000	0	1	1		\$5,001-\$15,000	1	0	1
	\$15,001-\$30,000	0	0	0		\$15,001-\$30,000	1	0	1
	\$30,001-\$60,000	2	0	2		\$30,001-\$60,000	0	0	0
Poultry	Number of responders	4	5	9	Goat	Number of responders	0	2	2
	\$0	1	1	2		\$0	0	0	0
	\$1-\$1,000	1	0	1		\$1-\$1,000	0	1	1
	\$1,001-\$2,500	1	0	1		\$1,001-\$2,500	0	0	0
	\$2,501-\$5,000	0	0	0		\$2,501-\$5,000	0	1	1
	\$5,001-\$15,000	1	2	3		\$5,001-\$15,000	0	0	0
	\$15,001-\$30,000	0	0	0		\$15,001-\$30,000	0	0	0
	\$30,001-\$60,000	0	2	2		\$30,001-\$60,000	0	0	0
Swine	Number of responders	3	3	6	Total	Total number of responders ¹³	9	5	14
	\$0	2	0	2		\$0	4	1	5
	\$1-\$1,000	0	0	0		\$1-\$1,000	1	1	2
	\$1,001-\$2,500	1	0	1		\$1,001-\$2,500	2	0	2
	\$2,501-\$5,000	0	1	1		\$2,501-\$5,000	3	3	6
	\$5,001-\$15,000	0	2	2		\$5,001-\$15,000	2	5	7
	\$15,001-\$30,000	0	0	0		\$15,001-\$30,000	1	0	1
	\$30,001-\$60,000	0	0	0		\$30,001-\$60,000	2	2	4

¹³ The "Total" category reflects the sum of responses across all animal categories. However, the "Total number of responders" counts each individual only once. Example: A person who raises both sheep and cattle may submit two responses, but they are counted as a single responder in the "Total number of responders" row.

Appendix C: Survey Responses from Processors

Please indicate the type of processing/slaughter you currently use for the animals you raise. <i>Select all that apply</i>	Processors	Both	Total
Number of responders	3	11	14
Custom exempt	1	4	5
State Inspected (acceptable for sale within Maine)	0	1	1
State Inspected, Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) (for interstate sales)	0	1	1
USDA Inspected	0	0	0
Poultry, 1,000 bird exemption	1	5	6
Poultry, 20,000 bird Small Enterprise exemption	0	1	1
Poultry, 20,000 bird Grower Producer exemption	0	0	0
I do not have a license	1	1	2
Other (Retail exempt)	0	1	1

Are you looking into adding or changing the type of license or registration you currently have?	Processor	Both	Total
Number of responders	3	11	14
Yes	2	5	7
No	1	6	7

What type of license or registration are you considering applying for? <i>Select all that apply.</i>	Processors	Both	Total
Number of responders	2	5	7
Custom exempt	0	0	0
State Inspected (acceptable for sale within Maine)	1	0	1
State Inspected, Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) (for interstate sales)	0	3	3
USDA Inspected	1	1	2
Poultry, 1,000 bird exemption	0	0	0
Poultry, 20,000 bird Small Enterprise exemption	0	1	1
Poultry, 20,000 bird Grower Producer exemption	0	5	5
I do not have a license	0	0	0

Please indicate the species you slaughter or process in a typical year. <i>Select all that apply.</i>	Processors	Both	Total
Number of responders	3	11	14
Beef	1	2	3
Poultry	2	9	11
Swine	1	2	3
Sheep	2	2	4
Goat	2	2	4
Other	0	3	3

How do you stay current on regulations and best practices? Check all that apply	Processor	Both	Total
Number of responders	2	11	13
I have taken classes on meat or poultry processing	1	5	6
I read about changes to regulations or practices	1	8	9
I utilize materials on the DACF QAR website or other Maine-based documents	1	6	7
My inspector informs me of changes to regulations	1	7	8
Other (response: other farmers)	0	1	1

You indicated that you have taken classes on meat or poultry processing. Please estimate the total number of hours you have spent in training or classes related to meat and poultry processing of any type.	Processor	Both	Total
Number of responders	1	4	5
1-20 hours	0	2	2
21-40 hours	1	0	1
41-60 hours	0	0	0
61-80 hours	0	0	0
81-100 hours	0	0	0
>100 hours	0	2	2

You indicated that you use materials on the DACF QAR website or other Maine-based documents. Please identify the materials or documents you use.	You indicated that you read about changes to regulations or practices. Please identify the publications, websites, or other information sources you read for this purpose.
Number of responders: 4	Number of responders: 8
Home Food License	agricultural institute
HACCP [<i>Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point</i>]	Cornell University
Poultry Processing Documents	Emails sent out by DACF
FSIS [<i>USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service</i>]	FSIS [<i>USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service</i>]
Rules and Guidances	Maine.gov
	Regulations
	University Extension documents from various states, UMaine extension email newsletters, extension classes from Oregon, Maine, and Minnesota.
	APPPA magazine [<i>American Pastured Poultry Producers Association</i>]
	Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network email newsletters
	udemy.com

Please indicate the approximate number of animals of each species you process in a typical year.

		Processor	Both	Total			Processor	Both	Total
Beef	Number of responders	1	2	2	Sheep	Number of responders	2	2	4
	1-10 cows	0	2	2		1-10 sheep	1	2	3
	11-20 cows	1	0	0		11-20 sheep	0	0	0
	21-30 cows	0	0	0		21-30 sheep	0	0	0
	31-40 cows	0	0	0		31-40 sheep	0	0	0
	>40 cows	0	0	0		>40 sheep	1	0	1
Poultry	Number of responders	1	9	10	Goat	Number of responders	2	2	4
	1-100 birds	0	2	2		1-10 goats	1	2	3
	101-300 birds	0	3	3		11-20 goats	0	0	0
	301-500 birds	0	0	0		21-30 goats	0	0	0
	501-700 birds	0	1	1		31-40 goats	0	0	0
	701-900 birds	1	0	1		>40 goats	1	0	1
	901-1100 birds	0	2	2	Other	Number of responders	0	1	1
	>1100 birds	0	1	1		1-10 rabbits	0	1	1
				Number of responders		0	1	1	
Swine	Number of responders	1	2	3	1-10 deer	0	1	1	
	1-10 pigs	0	0	0	Total # of responders ¹⁴	2	9	11	
	11-20 pigs	0	1	1					
	21-30 pigs	1	1	2					
	31-40 pigs	0	0	0					
	>40 pigs	0	0	0					

¹⁴ This table does not include a "Total" row because of the wide variation in animal counts between livestock and poultry categories. The "Total number of responders" counts each individual only once. Example: A person who raises both sheep and cattle may submit two responses, but they are counted as a single responder in the "Total number of responders" row.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	My inspector is my primary source of information about changes to regulations.			My inspector is my primary source of information about best practices in processing meat and poultry products.			I frequently search for information on my own regarding changes to regulations.			I frequently search for information on my own regarding best practices in processing meat and poultry products.			I only look for new information regarding the industry when there is an issue.		
	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total
# of responders	2	10	12	2	10	12	2	10	12	2	10	12	2	10	12
Strongly disagree	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	2
Somewhat disagree	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	4
Neither agree nor disagree	1	4	5	1	3	4	1	2	3	0	2	2	1	4	5
Somewhat agree	1	2	3	1	2	3	0	2	2	1	2	3	0	0	0
Strongly agree	0	2	2	0	3	3	1	3	4	1	4	5	0	1	1

	You indicated that your inspector is your primary source of information about changes to regulations.			You indicated that your inspector is your primary source of information about best practices in processing meat and poultry products.			How satisfied are you with the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection/Licensing Program?			
	How satisfied were you with your interactions with your inspector?						Both	Processor	Producer	Total
	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total				
Number of responders	1	4	5	1	5	6	6	1	4	11
Extremely dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
Somewhat satisfied	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Extremely satisfied	0	4	4	1	5	6	4	0	1	5

If your slaughter facility has been registered or licensed within the last five years, or if you have attempted to register or license your facility within the same period, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

	The meat and poultry licensing regulations in the State of Maine are straightforward and easy to understand.			The meat and poultry guidance documents on the DACF's website are difficult to understand.			The licensing and inspection staff that I interact with at the DACF are helpful to me in complying with food safety regulations.			The licensing and inspection staff I interact with at the DACF are courteous.		
	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total
Number of responders	1	7	8	1	7	8	1	6	7	1	6	7
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	1	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Somewhat agree	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1
Strongly agree	1	5	6	0	2	2	0	4	4	1	4	5
I don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	The licensing and inspection staff I interact with at the DACF are not knowledgeable about food safety.			The Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection Program is effective at maintaining the food safety of the meat processed in Maine.			Making meat processors jump through hoops seems more important than food safety to the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection Program.					
	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total	Processor	Both	Total			
Number of responders	1	6	7	1	6	7	1	6	7			
Strongly disagree	1	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	3			
Somewhat disagree	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Neither agree nor disagree	0	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	2			
Somewhat agree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1			
Strongly agree	0	1	1	1	3	4	0	1	1			
I don't know	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0			

Appendix D: Survey Responses from All Survey Participants (Producers, Processors, & Both)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	I have access to someone at the DACF to provide me with technical assistance with any of my meat and poultry raising/processing issues.				I do not have access to the overall level of technical assistance that I need from the DACF.				The depth of the technical assistance I can get from DACF is enough.			
	Both	Processor	Producer	Total	Both	Processor	Producer	Total	Both	Processor	Producer	Total
Number of responders	7	1	11	19	7	1	11	19	7	1	11	19
Strongly disagree	0	0	4	4	4	0	2	6	0	0	3	3
Somewhat disagree	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4
Neither agree nor disagree	1	0	2	3	2	1	2	5	1	1	2	4
Somewhat agree	2	0	1	3	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	1
Strongly agree	3	0	1	4	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	3
I don't know	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	3	1	0	3	4

	The DACF is slow to reply to my technical assistance requests.				Requesting technical assistance from the DACF is easy.			
	Both	Processor	Producer	Total	Both	Processor	Producer	Total
Number of responders	7	1	11	19	7	1	11	19
Strongly disagree	3	0	0	3	0	0	2	2
Somewhat disagree	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3	1	3	7	1	1	3	5
Somewhat agree	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
Strongly agree	0	0	4	4	3	0	1	4
I don't know	1	0	3	4	1	0	4	5

	How satisfied are you with the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection/Licensing Program?				How satisfied are you with the Consumer Products Inspection/Licensing program?			
	Both	Processor	Producer	Total	Both	Processor	Producer	Total
Number of responders	6	1	4	11	2	0	2	4
Extremely dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	0	2	3	1	0	1	2
Somewhat satisfied	1	1	1	3	1	0	0	1
Extremely satisfied	4	0	1	5	0	0	1	1

Appendix E:

Finally Adopted Rule Chapter 348, Exemption for On-Farm Raising, Slaughter, and Processing of Less Than 1,000 Ready-to-Cook Whole Poultry

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

Chapter 348: EXEMPTION FOR ON-FARM RAISING, SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING OF LESS THAN 1,000 READY-TO-COOK WHOLE POULTRY

SUMMARY: The purpose of this chapter is to set forth regulations for the slaughter and processing of whole ready-to-cook poultry carcasses for a poultry producer that processes fewer than 1,000 birds annually of their own raising, in accordance with 22 M.R.S. § 2517-C(4).

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS

1. For purposes of this chapter and unless the context otherwise indicates, the following words shall have the following meanings.
 - A. “Ante-Mortem Examination” means the inspection of live poultry prior to being slaughtered for sickness or disease.
 - B. “Community Supported Agriculture” means an arrangement whereby individual consumers have agreements with a farmer to be provided with food or other agricultural products produced on that farm.
 - C. “Good Commercial Practices” means a systematic approach in which establishments focus on treating poultry in such a manner as to minimize excitement, discomfort, and accidental injury the entire time that live poultry is held in connection with slaughter.
 - D. “Interstate Commerce” means the sale of ready-to-cook poultry or the transportation of poultry between different states.
 - E. “Locally Owned Grocery Store” means a grocery store at least 51% of which is owned by one or more residents of the State and that has a gross floor area of 25,000 square feet or less.
 - F. “Locally Owned Restaurant” means an eating establishment at least 51% is owned by one or more residents of the State and that is not a chain restaurant pursuant to 22 MRSA section 2491, subsection 2-B.
 - G. “Post-Mortem Inspection” means the inspection of poultry organs and tissue for evidence of disease that would make the meat unsuitable for human food.

- H. “Quarantine” means a place of isolation in which live poultry that are displaying signs of infectious or contagious disease or have been exposed to an infectious disease are placed.
- I. “Poultry” means any domesticated bird (chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, or squabs), whether live or dead.
- J. “Poultry Producer” means a person that raises poultry which are offered for sale.
- K. “Ready-to-Cook Poultry” means domestic poultry which has been slaughtered for human food and from which the head, heart, kidneys, blood, feathers, feet, and inedible viscera have been removed, and is ready to cook without need of further processing.
- L. “Segregate” in all its moods or tenses means placement of diseased poultry into a restricted area separate from healthy poultry.
- M. “Poultry Processing” means the evisceration, washing, chilling, and packaging of poultry carcasses
- N. “Poultry Slaughter” means the slaughter, scalding, plucking, and defeathering of poultry, including the removal of the head and feet.
- O. “Zoonotic Disease” a disease which can be transmitted between animals and humans.

SECTION 2. POULTRY HEALTH

1. The slaughter or processing of dead, dying or diseased poultry is prohibited.
2. 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.
3. The establishment shall ensure that all poultry is free from medicated feed residues, medication, pesticides, and other residues before slaughter.

SECTION 3. LIVE POULTRY HUMANE HANDLING

1. Live poultry holding areas shall be provided with adequate ventilation to prevent exposure to extreme temperatures.
2. Animal pens, crates or other holding areas must allow for satisfactory ante-mortem examination of live poultry by the producer.
3. Establishments shall use Good Commercial Practices to minimize to the greatest extent practicable poultry mortality resulting from causes other than slaughter.

SECTION 4. OPERATIONAL AREAS

1. The area(s) used for poultry processing must be separated from any area(s) used for holding live animals or poultry slaughter. Outdoor areas may be utilized for slaughter and processing operations provided the requirements of this chapter are met.
2. The area(s) used for poultry processing must be protected from contamination by activities in the live holding and poultry slaughter area(s) through the use of physical distance or through the erection of walls, screens, or any other physical barriers adequate to prevent splash back and other physical contamination of carcasses in poultry processing area(s).
3. Areas used for poultry processing must be protected from pests such as flies or nuisance insects or animals through the use of physical walls, screens, fans or any other method adequate to prevent contamination of the poultry carcasses by pests.
4. Poultry offal and other inedible materials generated during poultry slaughter and poultry processing operations cannot be stored in the same coolers or freezers in which edible products are stored.

SECTION 5. GENERAL RULES

1. An establishment must be operated and maintained in a manner sufficient to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and to ensure that product is not adulterated within the meaning of 22 M.R.S. § 2511(1).

SECTION 6. ESTABLISHMENT GROUNDS AND FACILITIES

1. **Grounds and pest control.** The areas where poultry slaughter operations are conducted must be maintained to prevent conditions that could lead to insanitary conditions and adulteration of products, including, but not limited to, keeping grass cut short, removing large junk or other harborage sites for pests, and using areas away from fecal soiled pens. Pest control chemicals used in and around these areas must be safe and effective under the conditions of use and not be applied or stored in a manner that will result in the adulteration of product or the creation of insanitary conditions.
2. **Lights.** Lighting of good quality and sufficient intensity must be provided in areas where poultry carcasses are processed and where equipment is cleaned and sanitized before use to ensure that visibility is sufficient to ensure that sanitary conditions are maintained and that product is not adulterated.
3. **Ventilations.** Ventilation must be adequate to control odors, vapors, and condensation to the extent necessary to prevent adulteration of product and the creation of insanitary conditions.
4. **Water supply.** A supply of running water that complies with the National Primary Drinking Water regulations (40 CFR part 141), at suitable temperatures and pressures to effectively clean carcasses, equipment and facilities must be provided in all areas where required (for processing product, for cleaning rooms and equipment, utensils, and packaging materials, for employee sanitary facilities, etc.). If an establishment uses a private well for its water supply, it must make available, upon request, documentation certifying the potability of the water

supply has been found to meet the drinking water standards for nitrates and coliform bacteria in the National Primary Drinking Water regulations identified above. Testing shall occur at a state certified laboratory at least semi-annually, unless operations are conducted seasonally. Seasonal operations, defined as those lasting less than 6 months, must test annually prior to commencing operations for that season.

SECTION 7. EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS

1. Equipment and utensils used for processing or otherwise handling edible product or ingredients must be of such material and construction to facilitate thorough cleaning and to ensure that their use will not cause the adulteration of product during processing, handling, or storage. Equipment and utensils must be maintained in sanitary condition so as not to adulterate product.
2. Equipment and utensils must not be constructed, located, or operated in a manner that prevents the producer from inspecting the equipment or utensils to determine whether they are in sanitary condition.
3. Receptacles used for storing inedible material must be of such material and construction that their use will not result in the adulteration of any edible product or in the creation of insanitary conditions. Such receptacles must not be used for storing any edible product and must bear conspicuous and distinctive markings to identify permitted uses.

SECTION 8. SANITARY OPERATIONS

1. All food-contact surfaces, including food-contact surfaces of utensils and equipment, must be cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and the adulteration of product.
2. Non-food-contact surfaces of facilities, equipment, and utensils used in the operation of the establishment must be cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and the adulteration of product.
3. Cleaning compounds, sanitizing agents, processing aids, and other chemicals used by an establishment must be safe and effective under the conditions of use. Such chemicals must be used, handled, and stored in a manner that will not adulterate product or create insanitary conditions. Documentation substantiating the safety of a chemical's use in a food processing environment must be available to inspection program employees for review.
4. Sanitization may be accomplished by one of the following methods:
 - A. Immersion for at least one-half (1/2) minute in clean, hot water at a temperature of at least 180 ° F.
 - B. 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.
 - C. 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.

- D. 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.
5. There shall be readily available a test kit or other device to accurately determine the concentration of the sanitizing solution being applied to food contact surfaces.
 6. The use of antimicrobial chemicals to reduce pathogen load shall be consistent with the manufacturer's instructions for concentration and exposure time. There shall be readily available a test kit or other device to accurately determine the concentration being applied.
 7. Poultry carcasses that have been contaminated by ingesta or fecal material shall be reconditioned in an area separate from the evisceration area. Carcasses shall be trimmed and washed of contamination, and an antimicrobial chemical can be applied in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. DACF Division of Quality Assurance & Regulation will make available on its website a list of antimicrobial agents and processes that are allowed for decontamination under this rule.

SECTION 9. EMPLOYEE HYGIENE

1. *Cleanliness.* All persons working in contact with product, food-contact surfaces, and product-packaging materials must adhere to hygienic practices, including but not limited to, covering of open wounds, restraint of long hair, removal of jewelry and washing of hands after employee use of the toilet while on duty to prevent adulteration of product and the creation of insanitary conditions.
2. *Clothing.* Aprons, frocks, and other outer clothing worn by persons who handle product must be of material that is disposable or readily cleaned. Clean garments must be worn at the start of each working day, and garments must be changed during the day as often as necessary to prevent adulteration of product and the creation of insanitary conditions.
3. *Disease control.* Any person who has or appears to have an infectious disease, open lesion, including boils, sores, or infected wounds, or any other abnormal source of microbial contamination, must be excluded from any operations which that could result in product adulteration and the creation of insanitary conditions until the condition is corrected.

SECTION 10. OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

1. Operations and procedures involving the preparation, storing, or handling of ready-to-cook whole chicken shall be strictly in accord with clean and sanitary methods.
 - A. All operations in the processes of inspecting, transporting, segregating, preparing, manufacturing, packaging, and storing of food shall be conducted in accordance with adequate sanitation principles to ensure that contamination and/or adulteration is prevented.
 - B. A post-mortem inspection of all carcasses and organs must be performed by the producer and carcasses and organs found to be diseased must be discarded.
 - C. Chemical, microbial, or extraneous-material testing procedures shall be used 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 M.R.S. § 2156 of Maine law shall be rejected, or, if possible, treated and processed to eliminate the contamination.

- D. The evisceration of ready-to-cook poultry shall result in the head, feet, and all organs being separated from the carcass. The head, feet, and internal organs must be discarded and shall not be used for human food.
- E. Any ice used in contact with food or food contact surfaces shall be made from potable water. All ice manufacturing equipment, shovels, scoops, and storage and transportation bins shall be maintained in a sanitary condition through frequent cleaning including sanitization where indicated.
- F. 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.
- G. All feathers from plucking and offal resulting from the eviscerating operation shall be removed as often as necessary to prevent the development of a nuisance and insanitary conditions.
- H. All packaging material used for packaging poultry products must be certified by the manufacturer as food grade.
- I. 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.
- J. 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 contamination of the human food.
- K. Storage and transportation of dressed poultry carcasses shall be under conditions that will protect food against physical, chemical, and microbial contamination as well as against deterioration of the carcass and the container.

SECTION 11. SCALDING PROCEDURES

1. Scalding equipment shall be kept clean and scalding water replenished at intervals to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions.
2. Poultry carcasses that are over-scalded may start to cook. Because of this, over-scalded carcasses are no longer ready-to-cook poultry. Cooked poultry carcasses must be denatured and discarded.

SECTION 12. TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILLING AND REFRIDGERATED STORAGE

1. Poultry slaughter establishments must ensure that all poultry carcasses are chilled immediately after slaughter operations so that there is no outgrowth of pathogens, unless such poultry is to be packed and frozen immediately at the establishment.

2. All poultry that is slaughtered and eviscerated in the establishment using ice chilling shall chill immediately after processing so that the internal temperature of poultry carcasses:
 - A. Weighing under 4 pounds shall be reduced to 40 °F or below within 4 hours of processing;
 - B. Weighing 4 to 8 pounds shall be reduced to 40 °F or below, within 6 hours of processing; or
 - C. Weighing over 8 pounds shall be reduced to 40 °F or below, within 8 hours of processing, unless such poultry is to be frozen.
3. Establishments may instead air chill ready-to-cook poultry carcasses if mechanical refrigeration is provided and designed so carcasses are spaced on racking or rail systems to allow adequate air flow. The internal temperature of the carcass shall be reduced to 40° F or less within 16 hours
4. Poultry held in packaged form shall be stored at 40 °F or less.

SECTION 13. EXEMPTION REQUIREMENTS FOR LESS THAN 1,000 BIRD FARM RAISED POULTRY SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING

1. In order to qualify to slaughter and process poultry to be sold in commerce under the 1,000 poultry exemption, the following conditions must be met:
 - A. The farm raises on their premises fewer than 1,000 live poultry to be slaughtered on-farm in one calendar year (January 1 – December 31).
 - B. Whole poultry carcasses slaughtered on-farm under this exemption may not be offered for sale nor transported in interstate commerce.
 - C. All poultry carcasses slaughtered, processed and sold in commerce must be assigned a unique lot number and producers must keep written records of these lot numbers and their point of sale.
 - D. The owner(s) of the slaughter and processing establishment operating under this exemption shall maintain registration with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, to be renewed annually.
 - E. All poultry must be labelled in accordance with 22 MRSA 2517-C(1)(I).
 - F. Poultry may only be sold in accordance with 22 MRSA 2517(2).

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Issued in accordance with 22 MRSA 2517-C(4)

Appendix F:

Proposed Amendments to 22 M.R.S.A. ch. 562-A

Proposed Bill Language

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows.

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §2511 is amended by enacting a new subsection 17 to read:

17. Grower Producer. "Grower Producer" means a person licensed under section 2514 that processes 20,000 poultry or fewer in a calendar year that elects to operate under an exemption pursuant to section 2517-C, subsection 1-A.

Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §2511 is amended by amending subsection 47 to read:

47. Wholesale distributor. "Wholesale distributor" means a person who sells meat, ~~meat products, and poultry products~~ to retail vendors, other merchants or to industrial, institutional and commercial users mainly for resale or business use.¶
[PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶

Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §2512 is amended to read:

§2512. Powers and duties of the commissioner¶

The commissioner shall implement a meat and poultry products inspection ~~and licensing~~ program that imposes and enforces requirements with respect to intrastate operations and commerce that are at least as stringent as those imposed and enforced under the federal acts with respect to operations and transactions in interstate commerce. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is designated as the state agency to administer this chapter and to cooperate with the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States in developing and administering the state meat inspection program.

Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §2512, sub-§1, ¶G is amended to read:

G. Require that persons licensed ~~under this chapter in accordance with section 2514~~ keep records; fully and correctly disclose all transactions involved in their business; and afford to the commissioner and the commissioner's representatives, including representatives of other governmental agencies designated by the commissioner, access to their places of business and opportunity, at all reasonable times, to examine the facilities, inventory and records, to copy the records and to take reasonable samples of the inventory upon the payment of the fair market value.

Sec. 5. 22 MRSA §2514 is amended to read:

1. License or registration required. A person may not engage in intrastate commerce in the business of buying, selling, preparing, processing, packing, storing, transporting or otherwise handling meat, meat food products or poultry products, unless that person holds a valid license issued under 22 MRSA Chapter 551: Pure Foods and Drugs Generally ~~this chapter~~ or is registered under section 2514-A. Categories of licensure include:¶

- A. Commercial slaughterers; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- B. [PL 2021, c. 64, §17 (RP).]¶
- C. Commercial processors; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- D. [PL 2021, c. 64, §18 (RP).]¶
- E. Wholesale distributors, except that livestock producers and livestock dealers who sell carcasses to or through inspected slaughterhouses are exempt from having to obtain a wholesale distributor's license under this paragraph. All other licensing provisions are applicable; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- F. Retail vendors; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- G. Meat and poultry product brokers; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- G-1. [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §7 (RP).]¶
- H. Renderers; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- I. Public warehouse operators; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- J. Animal food manufacturers; [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶
- K. Handlers of dead, dying, disabled or diseased animals; [PL 2013, c. 304, §3 (AMD).]¶
- L. Any other category that the commissioner may by rule establish; and [PL 2013, c. 304, §3 (AMD).]¶
- M. Mobile poultry processing unit operators. [PL 2013, c. 304, §4 (NEW).]¶
[PL 2021, c. 64, §§17, 18 (AMD).]¶

2. Application. ~~A person required to hold a license under subsection 1 shall apply in writing to the commissioner on a form prescribed by the commissioner. In case of a change of ownership or location, a new application must be made. A person engaged in more than one activity subject to licensure shall obtain a separate license for each activity.~~¶
[PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶

3. Investigate circumstances. ~~The commissioner shall investigate all circumstances in connection with an application for licensure to determine whether the applicable requirements of this chapter and rules adopted under this chapter are satisfied.~~¶
[PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶

4. Issuance of license. The commissioner shall issue a license to an applicant who the commissioner determines satisfies the requirements of this chapter and the rules adopted under this chapter and Chapter 551: Pure Foods and Drugs Generally. ~~Each license must bear an identifying number.~~¶
[PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]¶

5. Annual license fee; rules. ~~All licenses issued under this section expire on December 31st. The commissioner shall adopt rules to establish a schedule of fees for licenses issued under this chapter.~~

~~Fees must be appropriate to the size of the establishment. Notwithstanding Title 5, section 8071, subsection 3, paragraph B, rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. [PL 2007, c. 539, Pt. GGGG, §7 (AMD).]~~

~~6. Denial, suspension or revocation of license. The commissioner may, after notice and opportunity for hearing in conformance with the applicable provisions of the Maine Administrative Procedure Act, suspend or revoke a license or may take any other action that the commissioner determines appropriate concerning a license. The following are grounds for denial, suspension or revocation of a license:~~

~~A. The commissioner determines that a false statement was made in the license application; or [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]~~

~~B. The commissioner finds that the licensee failed to comply with this chapter or the rules made under this chapter. [PL 1999, c. 777, §1 (NEW).]~~

Sec. 6. 22 MRSA §2517-C, sub-1-A is amended to read:

~~1-A. Grower Producer Exemption for processing fewer than 20,000 birds annually. A poultry producer may slaughter and process that producer's own poultry without an inspector being present during processing if all the following criteria are met; a producer that does not meet these criteria does not qualify for this exemption and shall seek state or United States Department of Agriculture inspection of poultry products intended to be sold:~~

~~A. The producer is licensed as a commercial processor pursuant to section 2514; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]~~

~~B. The producer's facilities conform to the rules of the department governing food processing and manufacturing, in Chapter 551: Pure Foods and Drugs Generally, including a:~~

~~(1) Separate area for slaughter, bleeding and defeathering;~~

~~(2) Separate area for evisceration and cooling; and~~

~~(3) Water supply that is tested twice annually for nitrates, nitrites and coliforms; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]~~

~~C. The producer raises, slaughters and processes, on that producer's premises, no more than 20,000 poultry in a calendar year. The producer must declare to the Department of Agriculture,~~

Conservation and Forestry that it is exempt under this subsection at the beginning of each calendar year. Records must demonstrate numbers of birds raised. A producer that does not maintain accurate records does not qualify for the exemption under this subsection. [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

D. The producer's facility is not used to slaughter or process poultry by any other person or business without prior approval from the commissioner in accordance with the requirements of the federal Food Safety and Inspection Service Administrator. [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

~~E. The producer does not purchase birds for resale that have been processed under any exemption under this section.~~ [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

¶

F. Poultry are healthy when slaughtered. [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

G. Slaughter and processing are conducted using sanitary standards, practices and procedures to produce poultry products that are not adulterated. [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

H. The producer does not engage in Internet or interstate sales. [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

I. The shipping containers of the poultry bear the following labeling:¶

(1) Producer's name, address and zip code.¶

(2) Common name of product or list of ingredients.¶

(3) Weight of product in shipping container or immediate container.¶

(4) Lot number, which must consist of a coded number in some combination of the number of the day of the year on which the poultry was slaughtered.¶

(5) The statement "Exempt P.L. 90-492"; and¶

(6) Safe handling and cooking instructions as follows: "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." [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

The producer may further process poultry carcasses into parts and other products. The producer may sell retail poultry products to the household consumer and may sell wholesale poultry products in accordance with subsection 2 and with any required DACF licenses for distribution to retail stores, hotels, restaurants and institutions, with the appropriate licenses. ¶

Sec. 7. 22 MRSA §2517-C, sub-1-B is amended to read:

1-B. Small enterprise exemption. A small enterprise may slaughter, dress and cut up poultry without an inspector being present during processing if all the following criteria are met; a small enterprise that does not meet these criteria does not qualify for the exemption and shall seek state or United States Department of Agriculture inspection of poultry products intended to be sold.¶

A. The small enterprise is licensed as a commercial processor pursuant to section ~~2514~~; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

B. The small enterprise's facilities conform to the rules of the department governing food processing and manufacturing ~~in Chapter 551: Pure Foods and Drugs Generally.~~¶
~~including a:~~¶

~~(1) Separate area for slaughter, bleeding and defeathering;~~¶

~~(2) Separate area for evisceration and cooling; and~~¶

~~(3) Water supply that is tested twice annually for nitrates, nitrites and coliforms; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]~~¶

C. The small enterprise raises, slaughters and dresses poultry, or purchases live poultry to slaughter and dress, or purchases dressed poultry, in a combination of no more than 20,000 birds in a calendar year. The small enterprise must declare to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry that it is exempt under this subsection at the beginning of each calendar year. Records must show numbers of birds raised, purchased or purchased as dressed. A small enterprise that does not maintain accurate records does not qualify for the exemption under this ~~subsection~~; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

D. The small enterprise's further processing is limited to whole and cut up poultry ~~only~~; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

E. The facility is not used to slaughter or process poultry by any other person or business without prior approval from the commissioner ~~in accordance with the requirements of the federal Food Safety and Inspection Service Administrator~~; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

"

F. Slaughter and processing are conducted using sanitary standards, practices and procedures to produce poultry products that are not adulterated; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]

G. Poultry are healthy when slaughtered; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]

H. The small enterprise does not engage in Internet or interstate sales; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]

~~I. The small enterprise does not cut up and distribute poultry products to a business operating under any exemption under this section; [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]~~

¶

J. The shipping or immediate containers of the poultry bear the following labeling:¶

(1) Business name, address and zip code;¶

(2) Common name of product;¶

(3) Weight of product in shipping container or immediate container;¶

(4) Lot number, which must consist of a coded number in some combination of the number of the day of the year on which the poultry was slaughtered;¶

(5) The statement "Processed by a Licensed Commercial Food Processor/Small Enterprise Exempt from state or United States Department of Agriculture continuous bird-by-bird inspection"; and¶

(6) Safe handling and cooking instructions as follows: "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." [PL 2015, c. 329, Pt. A, §10 (RPR).]¶

The small enterprise may sell retail poultry products ~~to the household consumer and may sell wholesale poultry products in accordance with subsection 2 and with any required DACF licenses for distribution, wholesale to hotels, restaurants and institutions, prepackaged products to retail stores and retail products to household consumers, with the appropriate licenses.~~¶

Sec. 8. 22 MRSA §2517-D is amended to read:

§2517-D. Rental of a licensed slaughterhouse

1. Contract slaughtering. A commercial slaughterhouse licensed under section 2514 or a custom slaughterhouse registered under section 2514-A, but not engaging in the custom slaughter of poultry, may enter into a contract with a poultry producer who otherwise meets the requirements of the ~~small enterprise exemption for poultry producers that slaughter or process 20,000 or fewer poultry under the Poultry Products Inspection Act, 21 United States Code, Section 464(e)(3)~~ to rent that slaughterhouse to the poultry producer for the slaughter and processing of the poultry producer's poultry.

Poultry slaughtered and processed under the rental contract must be slaughtered and processed by the poultry producer.

A poultry producer that otherwise meets the requirements of the ~~20,000 or fewer poultry~~ small enterprise exemption, and having the intent to rent a slaughterhouse that is currently used by another poultry producer that meets the requirements of the exemption, must obtain approval from the commissioner ~~in accordance with the requirements of the federal Food Safety and Inspection Service Administrator.~~

[PL-2021, c. 64, §24 (AMD).]

2. Restrictions on point of sale. Poultry slaughtered and processed under this section may not be offered for sale or transportation in interstate commerce.

[PL-2013, c. 252, §5 (NEW).]

3. Labeling. Packaging for poultry slaughtered and processed under this section must ~~be labeled in accordance with section 2517-C subsection 1-B, bear the name and address of the renting poultry producer and the statement "Exempted P.L. 90-492."~~

Appendix G: Consumer Protection Inspector Training Requirement

All Inspection Program CPIs are required to complete the following courses in the following subjects.

The link below includes the list of courses, as well as an in-depth description, the length of time to take the course, and what skills and knowledge will be learned.

<https://www.fda.gov/training-and-continuing-education/oted-training-program-office-training-education-and-development/course-descriptions-objectives>

Prevailing Statutes, Regulations, and Ordinances

- FDA35 – Basic Food Law for State Regulators
- FDA38 – Basics of Inspection: Beginning an Inspection
- FDA39 – Basics of Inspections: Issues and Observations

Public Health Principles

- FDA36 – Public Health Principles

Microbiology

- MIC01 – Food Microbiological Control 1: Overview of Microbiology
- MIC02 – Food Microbiological Control 2A: Gram-Negative Rods
- MIC03 – Food Microbiological Control 2B: Gram-Positive Rods & Cocci
- MIC04 – Food Microbiological Control 3: Foodborne Viruses
- MIC05 – Food Microbiological Control 4: Foodborne Parasites
- MIC16 – Food Microbiological Control: Mid-Series Exam
- MIC06 – Food Microbiological Control 5: Controlling Growth Factors
- MIC07 – Food Microbiological Control 6: Control by Refrigeration and Freezing
- MIC08 – Food Microbiological Control 7A: Control by Thermal Processing
- MIC09 – Food Microbiological Control 7B: Control by Pasteurization
- MIC10 – Food Microbiological Control 7C: Control by Retorting
- MIC11 – Food Microbiological Control 8: Technology-based Food Processes
- MIC12 – Food Microbiological Control 9: Natural Toxins
- MIC13 – Food Microbiological Control 10: Aseptic Sampling
- MIC14 – Food Microbiological Control 11: Good Manufacturing Practices
- MIC15 – Food Microbiological Control 12: Cleaning and Sanitizing

Epidemiology

- FI01 – Foodborne Illness Investigations 1: Collecting Surveillance Data
- FI02 – Foodborne Illness Investigations 2: Beginning an Investigation
- FI03 – Foodborne Illness Investigations 3: Expanding the Investigation
- FI04 – Foodborne Illness Investigations 4: Conducting a Food Hazard Review
- FI05 – Foodborne Illness Investigations 5: Epidemiological Statistics
- FI06 – Foodborne Illness Investigations 6: Final Report

HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point)

- FDA16 – Basics of HACCP: Overview of HACCP
- FDA17 – Basics of HACCP: Prerequisite Programs and Preliminary Steps
- FDA18 – Basics of HACCP: The Principles

Additionally, the following courses are taken by the Inspection Program Staff. These courses are taken during the initial year of onboarding, or as they become available throughout the CPI's career.

FD112 – FDA Food Code Course

- This is a 4-day virtual training covering the FDA Model Food Code, Good Retail Practices (GRP), and public health reasons for regulations.

FD207 – Plan Review for Food Establishments

- This course covers the blueprint and equipment review process for retail food establishments.

FD215 – Managing Retail Food Safety

- This course is designed to allow participants an opportunity to explore the various ways that risk-based inspections can be applied in retail and food service establishments.

FD218 – Risk-Based Inspection Methods

- This workshop builds upon concepts learned in FD215 Managing Retail Food Safety and is designed to further enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of food safety inspection officers in conducting risk-based inspections.

FD312 – Special Processes at Retail

- This course explores the specific types of food processing in retail food establishments that are required by the FDA Food Code to have a variance and mandatory Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan.

Food Defense Training

- This training includes "Employees FIRST" to help front-line workers identify and reduce intentional contamination.

FD152 – Food Processing and Technology

- This course provides an overview of the basic principles in food processing, technology, and associated equipment used to ensure the safety of manufactured foods. Coursework includes detailed studies of food microbiology, food characteristics and properties, food chemistry, thermal and non-thermal processing and heat transfer, fluid flow, preservation technologies, fillers, and packaging technology. Extensive "hands-on" experience with processing equipment is provided in a pilot laboratory setting. The skills and knowledge obtained by investigators through this course will provide a strong foundation in food safety inspections for manufactured foods.

FD190 – Food Current Good Manufacturing Practices, Application, and Evidence

- This course teaches regulators how to apply the updated 21 CFR 117 regulations to food facilities; provides training on how to properly document and support findings during inspections; ensures facilities maintain appropriate, modernized, up-to-date methods; and emphasizes risk-based preventive controls. Key requirements include:
 - Personnel: Hygienic practices, health status, and training to prevent food contamination.
 - Plant and Grounds: Maintenance of grounds, design and construction of facilities, and sanitation to prevent pest infestation and contamination.
 - Sanitary Operations: Maintenance of equipment, utensils, and overall cleanliness.

- Production and Process Controls: Procedures for manufacturing, processing, packing, and holding food to ensure safety.

FD219 – Juice HACCP

- Participants learn how to apply the HACCP regulation – 21 CFR 120 in juice processing. They will evaluate a juice HACCP plan or the controls in place and determine:
 - compliance with the regulation and the FD&C Act;
 - whether a firm has implemented prerequisite programs (GMPs, SSOPs);
 - whether a firm's processes control significant food safety hazards through the participant conducting their own hazard analysis, ; and
 - if the firm is implementing the plan and sanitation monitoring, and document objectionable conditions.

FD202 – Conducting Acidified Food Inspections

- This course is designed for FDA investigators, state inspectors, analysts, supervisors, compliance officers, or those who are actively engaged in the inspection of acidified food plants or review or take compliance action on inspection reports or analysis. This course is open only to federal, state, or local health department employees.

FD249 – Conducting Seafood Inspections

- This course trains FDA and contracted state inspectors to evaluate seafood processors and importers for compliance with FDA seafood HACCP regulations, primarily found in 21 CFR Part 123.

Appendix H: Additional Information

Background on State Funding Sources for Meat & Poultry Processing:

In August 2022, the Mills administration, through DACF, announced the one-time Agricultural Infrastructure Investment Program (AIIP), a roughly \$20 million program funded by the American Rescue Plan Act and administered in partnership with Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI). AIIP awarded 64 competitive grants to farms and food processors across Maine to support equipment purchases, facility improvements, and inspection readiness. Several meat and poultry processors and on-farm processors received awards, including Five Pillars Butchery, Hatch's Custom Meat Cutting, Herring Brothers Meats, Southpaw Packing, Tide Mill, Weston's Meat & Poultry, Black Acres, and The Margolin Family Farm & Processing.

These awards supported modernization and compliance at existing operations but were not structured to systematically expand statewide slaughter capacity. The AIIP awards are documented in DACF's [approved awards list](#) dated August 19, 2022.

Background on Federal Funding Sources for Meat & Poultry Processing:

Between 2023 and 2024, federal funding further supported Maine's meat and poultry processing sector through two primary channels. In March 2023, the USDA awarded \$8 million to CEI through the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP) to capitalize a revolving loan fund providing financing and technical assistance to regional processors. Separately, USDA Rural Development awarded competitive grants directly to individual processors, most notably a \$2.7 million grant for a planned USDA-inspected slaughter and processing facility in Unity, with an estimated annual operational capacity of nearly one million pounds of meat.

While these federal investments have contributed to targeted capacity expansion, they operate independently of state funding and do not replace the need for a coordinated, state-led strategy focused on increasing slaughter capacity through new or expanded facilities.

Background on State and Federal Funding Sources for Shared Commercial Kitchens:

Funding for shared commercial kitchens in Maine has historically been sourced from a combination of federal, local, and philanthropic sources. Federal support has included congressionally-directed funds, such as the \$1 million allocated for a Bangor kitchen incubator in 2022, as well as USDA grants through programs like Rural Business Development Grants and the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program, which have supported planning, construction, and technical assistance for shared-use facilities.

At the local level, cities and community organizations—most notably Bangor and Skowhegan—have leveraged these federal funds alongside regional grants, including Northern Border Regional Commission awards, and philanthropic contributions from organizations such as the Maine Technology Institute and corporate partners, to acquire, renovate, and equip shared-use kitchens. While these investments have facilitated the development of facilities like Portland's Fork Food Lab and planned kitchens in Bangor and Skowhegan, Maine does not yet have a formal state-level program dedicated specifically to shared kitchen infrastructure. Projects have generally relied on a combination of federal, regional, and local funding sources.

States with Workforce Development Programs Focused on Incarcerated Populations

- At the Pickaway Correctional Institution in Ohio, incarcerated adults participate in a Meat Processing Career Center, where they receive training in slaughtering, cutting, packaging, and food

safety. Some programs also include HACCP and ServSafe training, and participants are linked with employers upon release.

- Minnesota's Northeastern Regional Corrections Center operates a meat processing facility where inmates gain hands-on experience, and state reports have explored formalizing this into a vocational training curriculum to address local workforce needs in meat slaughter and processing while building employable skills.
- In Delaware, a butcher shop program at the Sussex Community Corrections Center teaches incarcerated individuals basic butchering skills, including knife handling and sanitation, by processing donated deer for food banks. This approach could build on Maine's existing *Hunters for the Hungry* program, which partners with licensed processors to safely process donated deer for distribution to food-insecure residents, demonstrating how hands-on meat processing programs can provide both vocational skills and community benefits.