



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY

IN SUPPORT OF LD 2238

MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE RULE CHAPTER 348

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

March 19, 2026

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Craig Lapine. I am the Director of the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF). I am here to testify in favor of LD 2238, the Department's proposed major substantive Rule Chapter 348, *Exemption for On-Farm Raising, Slaughter, and Processing of Less Than 1,000 Ready-to-Cook Whole Poultry*.

This is a repeal-and-replace of an existing rule that was made obsolete by a 2015 statutory change. The rule before you has been provisionally adopted following a public comment period that ran from December 11, 2025, to January 12, 2026. It now comes before the Legislature as the final step of the major substantive rulemaking process.

In 2015, the 127th Legislature amended provisions of Title 22, Chapter 562-A: PREPARATION OF LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY PRODUCTS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION. The intention was to clarify and simplify regulations for small- and mid-size poultry producers who, under certain circumstances, may be exempt from the general requirement that meat and poultry be slaughtered and processed under continuous inspection. As directed by 22 MRS § 2517-C(4), this rule establishes the requirements for the physical facilities and sanitary processes used by poultry producers processing under the 1,000-bird exemption.

Farmers are eligible for the exemption from continuous inspection requirements, provided they raise and slaughter fewer than 1,000 birds annually and process them on their own farm. If they meet those requirements and a handful of others, these birds can be sold locally.

HARLOW BUILDING
18 ELKINS LANE
AUGUSTA, MAINE



PHONE: (207) 287-3200
FAX: (207) 287-2400
WWW.MAINE.GOV/DACF

In the spirit of the statutory change that precipitated this rule revision, we have attempted to keep the proposed rules as accessible and straightforward as possible. We first proposed a replacement for Chapter 348 in 2020 and received feedback from this Committee that the rule did not provide sufficient flexibility. We took that input to heart. In crafting this rule, our operating principle has been this: Be clear and concise about the food safety *goal*, but, when possible, let farmers determine how to reach it. For example, the rule no longer dictates specific requirements for a farm's plumbing or sewage systems. It directs farmers to have verifiably clean water that can reach certain temperatures. How they achieve that is largely up to them.

We believe this rule meets our requirements and those of the USDA, and that it creates clear, accessible guidelines for small-scale producers. Note that the obsolete rule on the books is 16 pages long. The rule the Department previously proposed in 2020 reduced that to 12 pages. The rule under consideration today is just 6 pages long.

Maine supports agriculture of all sizes, from large commercial operations to small local producers. DACF aims to serve all Maine farms by offering technical and financial assistance and right-sized regulations. In food safety, we work within federal limits to align regulatory burdens with public health benefits. We believe this proposed, provisionally adopted rule meets that standard.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have now, and the staff is here for the work session.