



Rules for Small, On-Farm Poultry Slaughter Operations in Oklahoma

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Introduction

Small poultry growers help meet an increasing demand for source-verified poultry products. All natural, organic, free-range and hormone/antibiotic-free statements are qualities many small poultry growers use to differentiate their products. As a 2021 Mintel market research report notes, these are some of the most preferred product claims (Owens, 2021). Table 1 shows the percentage of U.S. consumers desiring these and other traits on their poultry products. While chicken and turkeys are the most popular among consumers (e.g., as whole birds, breast/leg cuts or further processed), other poultry, such as ducks and Cornish game hens, were purchased and eaten by more than 10% of surveyed consumers during 2021 (Table 2). Geese and

Attributes	Percentage of Respondents
All Natural	43%
Hormone-Free	37%
No additives/preservatives	37%
Antibiotic-free	35%
Premium (e.g. Grade A)	28%
Free-range	27%
Non-GMO	27%
Organic	24%
Low-fat	19%
Pasture raised	16%
None of the above	16%

Table 1: Important attributes for U.S. consumers when choosing poultry, 2021 (source: 2021 Lightspeed/Mintel survey of 1,919 internet users aged 18+).

Types of Poultry	Percentage of Respondents
Chicken	93%
Turkey	61%
Duck	12%
Cornish game hen	11%
Goose	6%
Other poultry (e.g., pheasant, quail)	3%
None of the above	4%

Table 2: Types of poultry consumed by U.S. consumers June-December 2021 (source: 2021 Lightspeed/Mintel survey of 2,000 internet users aged 18+).

game birds also have niche market possibilities.

Small poultry growers have the potential to meet consumer demands for these specific production or breed claims. However, for small Oklahoma poultry growers, the options for achieving an inspected slaughter/processing status to move products into retail stores or restaurants are almost non-existent and cost prohibitive. There is currently only one state inspected poultry (and rabbit) slaughter facility in Oklahoma.

On-farm slaughter is the most common form of poultry slaughter in Oklahoma and is allowed under certain federal and state regulations. While the U.S. Department of Agriculture has exemptions for small poultry processors, each state has the right to establish its own exemption rules that may vary from those listed by the USDA. For Oklahoma, a grower can slaughter his/her own birds and sell the poultry or products up to a maximum of 2,500 turkeys or 10,000 chickens per year with approved facilities.

The Oklahoma Poultry Products Inspection Act's (see [ag.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Poultry-Rules-2022](https://www.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Poultry-Rules-2022)) pdf general provisions list the rules and regulations for slaughtering, processing and marketing poultry within the state. The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry is charged with ensuring that producers comply with the state's poultry processing laws. This fact sheet is designed to help small poultry growers and their customers better understand Oklahoma's small processor exemption regulations. This fact sheet does not address regulations for USDA-inspected poultry processing operations or other state and federal exemptions from the federal Poultry Products Inspection Act.

Requirements for Poultry Farm Slaughter Exempt Facilities

The Oklahoma Poultry Products Inspection laws have certain exemptions for small poultry producers to provide slaughter and sell poultry products. These exempt slaughter activities must ensure safe food products fit for human consumption. Specific requirements include the following for all exempt poultry processors:

- All producers must register as a poultry slaughter facility with ODAFF if poultry meat (whole bird or parts) is to be sold.
- Producers can only slaughter their own birds raised on their own farm (i.e., cannot slaughter other growers' birds) and cannot engage in buying or selling poultry or poultry products "other than those produced from poultry raised on their own farms."
- The poultry must be "healthy, slaughtered and processed under sanitary standards, practices and procedures that result in the preparation of products

that are sound, clean and fit for human food, and each carcass, part or poultry product bears a label that lists the producer's name and address."

- The label must also include the following statement: "This poultry product has not been inspected and passed"

Poultry Slaughter Exemptions by Volume

Poultry slaughter exemptions are limited in Oklahoma and based on a "turkey equivalent" scale, where any four other types of poultry (e.g., chickens, ducks, geese, game birds) are equal to one turkey. This ratio excludes ratites, such as ostriches and emus. On the registration form, a poultry grower must indicate one of the following annual slaughter limits: (a) 250 turkeys or 1,000 other poultry (Section 35:37-5-2(b)) or (b) 2,500 turkeys or 10,000 other poultry (Section 35:37-5-2(c)). Table 3 explains the requirements for both sizes.

Registration and Application Requirements for Custom Exempt, On-Farm Facilities

Custom exempt poultry operations are similar to custom exempt red meat plants. This means that a business or individual provides the services, time, skills, etc. to harvest privately owned poultry and return the cleaned carcass and/or parts to the owner. If the services are provided by the original owner of the poultry, then the harvesting/processing must be performed under one of the exemptions OR full inspection (Table 3). The rules for these custom exempt activities are as follows:

	250 Turkey Equivalent (1,000 other poultry)	251-2,500 Turkey Equivalent (>1,000-10,000 other poultry)	Greater than 2,500 Turkey Equivalent (>10,000 other poultry)
Potential Customers	Poultry must be sold directly to the household consumer	Poultry can be sold to household consumers, restaurants, hotels and boardinghouses	Full state or USDA inspection required
Selling and/or distribution	Must be sold from the producer	Can be sold from the producer or other person for distribution	Full state or USDA inspection required
ODAFF periodic visits	Must allow inspection from ODAFF at all reasonable times upon notice.	Must allow inspection from ODAFF at all reasonable times upon notice.	Full state or USDA inspection required
Sanitation requirements	N/A	Must meet sanitation requirements as provided in 9CFR 416.1-5 AND allow ODAFF inspection at least two times year	Full state or USDA inspection required
Other prohibited activities (related to poultry and poultry products)	N/A	Producers cannot be engaged in any other poultry exemptions or operate an inspected poultry establishment unless approved by ODAFF	N/A

Table 3: Oklahoma Poultry Slaughter Limitations per Calendar Year (January-December).

- Custom exempt poultry slaughter operations that provide any services (not goods), including but not limited to harvesting, chilling, cutting/boning or packaging, must submit an application and have all facilities approved by the director of the Food Safety Division of ODAFF prior to conducting operations. This includes any poultry slaughtered without ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection or custom processing parts or carcasses from non-inspected poultry.
- Any person or establishment not licensed as retail exempt business and engaged in custom processing of inspected and passed carcasses for individuals is required to submit an application and meet all facility requirements prior to conducting operations.

Registration and Application Requirements for Non-Farm Operations

Any person or business in Oklahoma engaging in slaughter, processing or transportation of poultry or poultry products are required to register with the state within ninety 90 days. These businesses include:

- A poultry products broker, renderer or animal food manufacturer.
- A wholesaler of any carcasses or parts or products of carcasses of any poultry, whether or not intended for human food.
- A public warehouseman storing poultry or poultry products.
- A buyer, seller or transporter in commerce of any dead, dying, disabled or diseased poultry or any part of carcasses of any poultry that died otherwise than by slaughter.

NOTE: Persons conducting the above-mentioned activities at an official, inspected establishment are not required to register.

Application for Farm Poultry Slaughter Exemption

To start the process of becoming an approved on-farm slaughter facility, a producer must complete and submit form FDS-MIS 217 to ODAFF (see ag.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FARM-POULTRY-SLAUGHTER.pdf). The producer should also be prepared to provide, upon request,

any supporting documents showing the layout of on-farm slaughter facilities and a sanitation plan.

Producers must also consider how wastewater from a poultry slaughter facility will be handled. The high biological load and solids content of slaughter wastewater can present challenges in water treatment for both municipal and non-municipal wastewater handling facilities. Clogged pipes, overflowing septic tanks and other environmental issues may result. Discharging waste into a treatment facility independent of an on-site waste system (e.g., a septic tank) may require a permit from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. If the waste is discharged into a municipal system, the producer may need to obtain a certificate from the Oklahoma Department of Health.

References and Helpful Resources

ODAFF Rules for Poultry Slaughter, 2022. Available at: <https://ag.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Poultry-Rules-2022.pdf>.

ODAFF Certificate of Registration for Farm Poultry Slaughter Operations. Available at <https://ag.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FARM-POULTRY-SLAUGHTER.pdf>.

Owen, J. Poultry—US—2021. Mintel, Inc. market research report. Available for purchase at www.mintel.com.

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing Operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act. Revision 1, April 2006. Available online at https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/import/Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0406.pdf.

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