

# On Farm Processing – Red Meat Cutting

Organic requirements are in addition to other statutory requirements  
Statutory information is for guidance only and is correct at time of going to print

## General Requirements for Meat Cutting Premises

Livestock must be slaughtered at a licensed slaughterhouse.

A farmer's small cutting room is subject to current food legislation, so you must contact your local Environmental Health Officer (EHO).

The EHO should visit and advise you on structural and hygiene requirements. He/she has to ensure food safety, (ie the operation must be carried out in an hygienic manner), so will take a risk-based view of the premises and meat-cutting operation.

**Premises:** Generally this will be a dedicated area with walls that are non-porous so they can be easily cleaned. Floors should be well-draining and ceilings finished to avoid flaking and dirt lodgement. Unwrapped meat should be suspended or kept on racks. Wrapped meat must be stored off the floor (eg on a pallet or shelf). Cutting tables and utensils should generally be stainless steel and there must be adequate hot water for effective cleaning. The person doing the meat cutting should have sufficient knowledge and skill to carry it out in a safe and hygienic manner and there should be hand-washing facilities in the room. Meat should be inspected for defects and contamination before cutting. Refrigeration is required because the temperature of the meat should not exceed 7°C during cutting, hanging or storage. (Note: There may soon be a requirement for minced meat to be kept at a lower temperature. Please check with your EHO.)

**Labelling:** Generally, labels must give a description of the type and cut of meat, name/address of the seller, recommended storage conditions, best before or use by date, weight and traceability information. Further help with labelling requirements can be obtained from your local Trading Standards Department.

**Traceability:** Each cut or pack of meat must be labelled so that it is traceable back to the day of kill and to the batch of animals slaughtered, hence to the producer.

## Organic Requirements

These requirements are in addition to the general requirements detailed above.

The livestock must be organic and must be killed in an organically-certified abattoir.

**Contamination:** There must be no contamination of the meat by chemicals used for cleaning or pest control or by other non-approved food stuffs. This means that:-

- **Cleaning** - product contact surfaces (eg cutting boards, utensils) may be cleaned with food-industry approved detergents/sanitiser but must then be rinsed with clean water before use;
- **Pest Control** - no fly sprays or other sprays of any kind may be used in the preparation and storage areas;

**Training** - Staff should be trained to understand and comply with the organic requirements

**Segregation** - If non-organic meat is cut in the same area, this must be done at a different time and there must be a full clean-down in between, to make sure there is no possibility of contamination or mix-up.

**Mass Balance** – It must be possible to reconcile the amount of meat bought in with the amount of meat sold. To do this, a record must be kept of the number of animals killed and the weight of meat brought into the cutting room. Records must also be kept of the weight of meat sold and wastage, including boning losses.

These Mass Balances are required for all organic processing operations but tend to be more difficult for meat, so it needs a lot of thought when you are setting up the operation. This is because meat is sold as different cuts, it may be boned or bone-in or sold as mince or made into sausages or burgers.

**Approved Ingredients** – if you plan to make and sell sausages or other multi-ingredient products, all ingredients must be organic or from the approved lists in Section 10 of the OF&G Control Manual. Recipes must be approved by OF&G before these items are marketed.

**Food Safety** - Be aware of food safety risks because meat products, particularly minced meat, can carry a lot of bacteria. Excellent hygiene, temperature control and a short recommended shelf life are required.

**Labelling** - The label must carry the statement “Organic Certification UK2”. (This identifies OF&G as the Certification Body.) The product name must also indicate that the product is organic. For multi-ingredient products, such as sausages, all organic ingredients must be identified in the ingredient list.

**Marketing** – It’s important to do a marketing plan before starting up. It’s not an organic requirement, but it’s sensible! You need to find out who your potential customers are, what type of products they’re likely to want and how much they are prepared to pay. You also need to assess the competition, predict sales volumes, be able to ensure continuity of supply and do rough costings before setting up. You may decide to sell from a shop at your farm, at farmers’ markets or by mail order. (It is also possible to sell through a local butcher or deli, but different regulations may apply. Check with your Environmental Health Officer.)

## Useful References

**Legislation:** The law requires that meat for direct sale by farmers be cut up in a cutting premises that has been licensed by the Food Standards Agency. However, in areas where licensed premises are not available or are unwilling to take on this work, the local authority can use its discretion and may allow the farmer to use a local butcher, provided that hygiene is not compromised and the meat is intended for sale on a local basis at farm shops or farmers’ markets. Alternatively the farmer may be allowed to set up a small cutting room and this is the situation for which this Technical Leaflet was written. Remember, whether a cutting plant, a local butcher or the farmer’s own premises are used, it needs to be organically certified.

There are also 2 items on the Food Standards Agency website that may be useful

Cutting of Meat for direct sale by Farmers – Guidance Notes  
([www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/meatcut](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/meatcut))

Cutting of Meat for direct sale by Farmers – your questions answered  
([www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/meatcut/cuttingmeat\\_faq](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/meatcut/cuttingmeat_faq))

### For information on hygiene in the workplace.

Useful book: Hygiene for Management by Richard Sprenger Tel: 01302 850007

Equipment for meat cutting rooms (freezers, cutting equipment, protective wear, sundries etc): check your local yellow pages or the web for butcher’s shop equipment.

**Grants:** Rural Development and Processing and Marketing Grants have been available but were due to end in 2006. Different grants may become available in 2007 – please check with your local Defra office, Business Link or the contacts given below.

Application forms and guidance notes for licence for larger meat cutting premises (processing up to 5 tonnes red meat per week) are available from the Food Standards Agency

Tel:	England	0207 276 8000	N. Ireland	02890 417700
	Scotland	01224 285100	Wales	02920 678999

or website [www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/meatplantsprems/meatpremllicence](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/meatplantsprems/meatpremllicence)