

Exemptions from USDA Inspection for Small-Scale Poultry Processors

► Learn more about exemptions to the Poultry Inspection Act available to small-scale poultry processors.

The Poultry Products Inspection Act applies to domestically raised chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, and squabs. Poultry farmers must follow certain rules and regulations to sell raw poultry products both in Alabama and out of state. All raw poultry products sold across state lines must be processed at a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)–inspected facility. The Congressional amendment Public Law (P.L.) 90-492 amended the Poultry Products Inspection Act to provide cooperation with appropriate state agency poultry products inspection programs. This Public Law paved the way for the available exemptions from federal inspection. Raw poultry products produced and sold by small-scale producers within Alabama can qualify for these exemptions.

Small-scale poultry producers have several options for exemption, the purpose of which is not for exclusion from the Poultry Products Inspection Act, but to help small-scale producers. Those exempt are not required to have each bird inspected by the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) during the slaughter and dressing process.

The full guidelines for exemption can be found in the USDA publication titled “Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing Operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act.”

The basics about the various exemptions are as follows:

Personal Use Exemption – Applies to a grower/producer/owner who slaughters and processes poultry for private use for themselves, household members, nonpaying guests, or employees.



Custom Slaughter/Processing Exemption – Applies to a slaughterer/producer who provides a service to an owner of live chickens but is not selling poultry to any consumers. The processed poultry may not be sold or donated by the owner of the live chickens.

Producer/Grower – 1,000 Limit Exemption – Applies to a producer/grower who slaughters and sells no more than 1,000 of the poultry they themselves have raised.

Producer/Grower – 20,000 Limit Exemption – Applies to a producer/grower who slaughters and sells no more than 20,000 of the poultry they themselves have raised.

Producer/Grower or Other Person Exemption (PGOP) – Applies to a producer/grower who slaughters and processes for sale directly to consumers or to a person who purchases live poultry and then slaughters and processes for sale directly to consumers. The number must total no more than 20,000 birds for the calendar year, and products may not be for retail resale.

Small Enterprise Exemption – Applies to a producer/grower who slaughters and dresses (limited to cutting up) for a business that purchases live poultry then slaughters and dresses (limited to cutting up) or for a

business that purchases dressed poultry and then cuts it up. The number must total no more than 20,000 birds for the calendar year.

Retail Exemption – Applies to a retail business that cuts birds for their store only.

Criteria that apply to all of the above exemptions are as follows:

- Poultry must be healthy when slaughtered.
- Poultry must be slaughtered and processed under sanitary conditions and practices that result in poultry products that are sound and fit for human consumption.
- All shipping containers must list the producer's name, address, and the statement, "Exempt P.L. 90-492."

Additional criteria apply specifically to each exemption, as outlined in "Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing Operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act."

In determining whether to apply for an exemption, first consider the goals of your operation, and then study the details of the criteria for your chosen exemption. A person or business may operate under only one exemption at a time. Once you have determined which exemption best fits your operation, contact the FSIS district office for further instructions. Have the details of your intended operation ready and outlined to facilitate the process.

If you have questions, contact your local Extension office or the FSIS district office.



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For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit www.aces.edu/directory.

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