



Contents

Page 1

Food Licensing
Modernization

Page 2

AGRI Meat, Poultry,
Egg, and Milk Processing
Grant

Summer Potluck Food
Safety

Meat Inspector Calendar –
No Inspection Dates

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Food Licensing Modernization

During the last legislative session, the Legislature approved changes to MINN. STAT. 28A to modernize food licensing. These changes are intended to simplify the application process for new food businesses and align funding to food safety oversight by directing funds to the appropriate regulatory programs.

What has changed?

Changes specific to the Minnesota Meat and Poultry Inspection Program will affect both custom exempt as well as Equal To meat processors. Previously, applicants applied for either a **Retail Food Handler** or a **Wholesale Food Processor or Manufacturer** license. Replacing both of these is a new, single “Food Handler” license. Custom exempt processors will retain a separate Custom Exempt Food Handler license. A one-time license application fee of \$50 will apply to all new Food Handler licenses. The annual cost of the Food Handler license will be based on the anticipated value of gross annual custom or food services and the license fees have increased. In addition, any new licenses are pro-rated based on the time of issuance.

Custom Exempt Food Handler license periods will remain July 1 through June 30 each year. Processors that apply during the licensing period will be charged a pro-rated fee based on the time of year; in other words, the fee is reduced if the applicant is applying part way through the year. License fees for Custom Exempt Food handler also increased. See information below for the date of implementation for current businesses.

Equal To meat processors’ will have a new license period of January 1 through December 31 to align with other food handler license periods. Processors applying during the license period will also have a pro-rated schedule.

What has not changed?

There has been no change to the types of businesses that need to be licensed. Businesses that provide custom services or plan to sell meat or meat products either through wholesale or retail sales will still be required to obtain a license prior to operating. The food safety regulations that licensees follow will remain the same, and the programs that provide the regulatory oversight will continue to do so.

Why are fees going up?

Licensing fees for food processors, manufacturers, and other food handlers were last updated in 2003. The fee increases included with this license modernization legislation reflect the cost of inflation. The new fee schedule for all food handlers is based on both

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Food Licensing Modernization *(continued from page 1)*

the level of food safety risk (and therefore, level of regulatory oversight) and the size of the business by gross sales. The one-time license and permit application fees are supporting the cost of an MDA customer portal which will eventually allow many license and permit holders to update contact information, apply for renewals, and pay fees online.

When do the changes take effect?

Starting August 1, 2025, new businesses applying for a food handlers license will see the increased fees, a one-time application fee, and pro-rated fee schedule. Later in 2025, existing Food Manufacturer and Food Processor license holders will have their licenses automatically updated to the single new Food Handler license and the new fee schedule will be applied for renewals. Then in early 2026, existing retail food handlers will have their licenses automatically updated to the single new Food Handler license and the new fee schedule will be applied for renewals. In addition, the name of Custom Exempt Food Handler licenses will remain the same; however, the fees will increase during the renewal period.

If you have questions regarding changes to your license, please contact the Dairy and Meat Inspection Division at 651-201-6300.

AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing Grant

The MDA's [Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation \(AGRI\)](#) Program Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing (MPEM), and the Value-Added Grant application periods are still open. Applications will be accepted until 4 p.m. on Thursday, August 7, 2025. The purpose of the MPEM grant is to facilitate the startup, modernization, or expansion of meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing businesses in Minnesota. The program intends to increase sales of Minnesota-raised livestock products by investing in equipment and physical improvements that support processing, capacity, market diversification, and market access.

For more information, including the request for proposals, eligibility requirements, and instructions on how to apply, visit the [AGRI Value-Added grant](#) and [MPEM grant](#) program webpages.



Summer Potluck Food Safety

Check out these helpful tips to help keep food safe during your summer gatherings.

- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Avoid cross-contamination.
- Cook foods thoroughly.
- Observe the two-hour rule.
- Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold.
- Keep food out of the danger zone (temps between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit).

Meat Inspector Calendar – No Inspection Dates

September 1, 2025 – Labor Day

November 11, 2025 – Veterans Day

November 27-28, 2025 – Thanksgiving Day and Day after Thanksgiving

December 25, 2025 – Christmas Day

January 1, 2026 – New Years Day

January 19, 2026 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 16, 2026 – Presidents Day

Meat, Poultry, and Egg Inspection Staff

Nikki Neeser, DVM . . . 651-201-6225

Levi Muhl 651-201-6216

Jennifer Stephes 651-248-2566

Andy Siira 320-295-2066

Alex Brandt 651-201-6308

Nicole Droher 651-231-5457

Michaela Gadiant 651-201-6630

Heidi Varberg 651-201-6009

Lisa Wetzel 651-201-6191

Nicole Wilson 651-201-6024

Catrina Andree 507-440-5861

Josie Lenneman 763-710-0447

Katie Brigán 320-385-0034

Kodi Klimek 320-424-8000

Sarah Current 320-874-0926

Sue Gorman 507-456-4570

Ashley Hassler 320-221-6507

Jennifer Hedeén 651-338-7145

Cullan Hewitt 320-304-4624

Jennifer Hofer 612-396-4941

Megan Jansa 651-396-9176

Justin Jarocki 651-285-8327

Myrrh-Anna Kienitz . . . 651-802-2789

Rayon King 651-285-8495

Carol Konkol 320-492-4151

Grace Martin 651-707-7751

Corrie McQuillan 320-296-1981

Shawn Neumann 218-296-2035

Eileen Schmidt 507-469-5951

Will Schroeder 320-424-2848

Dave Seipel 651-285-8321

Questions? Call the Dairy and Meat Inspection Division at 651-201-6300