



Minnesota

MEAT MINUTE

Volume 13, Issue 1
January 2026



Contents

Page 1

Venison Donation Program:
2025 Season Summary

Page 2

Retained Water Verification
FSIS Directive 6700.1 Revision

HACCP Hotspot

Hazard Analysis Critical
Control Points (HACCP)
Training

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Venison Donation Program: 2025 Season Summary

Since 2009, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to facilitate an annual donation of hunter-harvested venison to Minnesota food charities through the Venison Donation Program. This program provides a means for hunters to legally donate excess venison, reducing waste and allowing food shelves to offer this valuable protein source to people in need. Participating processors are paid for registering to accept donated deer and are also reimbursed for the costs associated with processing the donated deer.

Venison Donation Program Comparison by Year

Year	2023	2024	2025
Total Pounds of Venison Donated	7803*	7069*	9914*
Number of Registered Processors	23	23	22
Total Pounds of Venison Discarded Due to Lead	384	571	1112
Total Pounds of Venison Discarded Due to Lead	5.7%	8.08%	11.22%

*Does not include late season donations

For more information on the Venison Donation Program and to learn how to register as a participating processor in the future, visit the [Hunter Harvested Venison Donation in Minnesota website](#).

Retained Water Verification FSIS Directive 6700.1 Revision 2

Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) directive 6700.1 revision 2 provides instructions for program personnel to review establishments retained water protocol (RWP) and perform required verification activities for retained water in raw meat and poultry products. FSIS revised the directive to clarify that products that do not retain water are not required to have a RWP but must have support on file showing that their process does not result in retained water. The directive instructs inspection staff to verify that establishments maintain RWPs that meet regulatory requirements starting on December 1, 2025. [Review FSIS Directive 6700.1 Rev. 2 for more information.](#)

The [Guideline for Retained Water](#) was updated in January 2025. This guideline provides equations and examples for calculating retained water in products and recommendations to ensure both that the retained water protocol provides accurate data for labeling determinations and that it serves as a valuable tool for establishments developing RWPs or gathering support for their process.

HACCP Hotspot

Welcome to the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Hotspot! At least once per quarter we intend to provide reminders and tips about HACCP. This quarter the focus will be letters of guarantee (LOG). [9 Code of Federal Regulation \(CFR\) 417.2\(a\)](#) requires that establishments consider hazards that may arise during the production process. Letters of guarantee (LOG) may be one way for an establishment to support decisions regarding potential hazards.

An establishment might have a LOG for meat, poultry, food ingredients and packaging materials. There is no expiration date associated with letters of guarantee unless the issuer of the LOG makes that provision. However, if letters of guarantee are being used as support for decisions made in the hazard analysis, establishments are expected to conduct periodic verification activities to demonstrate that the information in the LOG continues to support decisions made in the hazard analysis. With January starting the new year, now is a good time to review letters of guarantee (LOG) to determine if they require updating, and to ensure that there is a LOG on file for all products being used in processing. If an establishment has started using a new product or a new supplier in the previous year, be sure to have a new LOG on file.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) Training

Are you looking for HACCP training? The University of Minnesota is hosting a HACCP, Sanitation and Auditing Workshop on January 15-16, 2026, at 365 Hacker Hall at the St. Paul campus. Topics covered include Pre-Requisite Sanitation programs, Good Manufacturing Practices and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures, the Seven Principles of Hazard, Analysis, Critical Control Point (HACCP), The Development of a HACCP plan, Labeling and Allergens, Minnesota State Inspection Program, Food Defense Plans, and more. [More information and to register online.](#)

2026 Meat Inspector Calendar – No Inspection Dates

- January 1, 2026 – New Year’s Day
- January 19, 2026 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 16, 2026 – President’s Day
- May 25, 2026 – Memorial Day
- June 19, 2026 – Juneteenth Holiday
- July 3, 2026 – July 4th Observed
- September 7, 2026 – Labor Day
- November 11, 2026 – Veterans Day
- November 26-27, 2026 – Thanksgiving Day and Day after Thanksgiving
- December 25, 2026 – Christmas Day

Meat, Poultry, and Egg Inspection Staff

Nikki Neeser, DVM	651-201-6225	Josie Lenneman	763-710-0447	Carol Konkol	320-492-4151
Levi Muhl	651-201-6216	Katie Brigan	320-385-0034	Grace Martin.	651-707-7751
Jennifer Stephe	651-248-2566	Kodi Klimek	320-424-8000	Corrie McQuillan	320-296-1981
Andy Siira	320-295-2066	Sarah Current	320-874-0926	Shawn Neumann	218-296-2035
Alex Brandt	651-201-6308	Ashley Hassler	320-221-6507	Eileen Schmidt	507-469-5951
Nicole Droher	651-231-5457	Jennifer Hede	651-338-7145	Will Schroeder	320-424-2848
Michaela Gadi	651-201-6630	Cullan Hewitt	320-304-4624	Dave Seipel.	651-285-8321
Heidi Varberg	651-201-6009	Jennifer Hofer	612-396-4941	Kaitlin Knaebe	651-392-3180
Lisa Wetzel	651-201-6191	Megan Jansa	651-396-9176	Delaney Rohan, DVM . . .	612-608-1328
Nicole Wilson	651-201-6024	Justin Jarocki	651-285-8327		
Catrina Andree	507-440-5861	Myrrh-Anna Kienitz . . .	651-802-2789		

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