
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2010HLS0024-000457
April 23, 2010

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

ENHANCED REGULATIONS SUPPORT LOCAL MEAT SALES

VICTORIA – Amendments to the Province’s Meat Inspection Regulation (MIR) will create two new categories of licences to better serve British Columbia’s remote and rural communities.

“These new licences will support local producers and processors around the province and will allow us to continue protecting the health and food safety of all British Columbians,” said Minister of Healthy Living and Sport Ida Chong. “These licences will initially be made available to livestock producers in Bella Coola, the Powell River Regional District and Haida Gwaii – the communities that participated in the consultation and actually helped develop this concept.”

The two new licence categories will permit livestock producers in rural and remote areas that are without reasonable access to licensed slaughter capacity to slaughter their animals and sell the meat directly to local consumers. One of the licences, available in nine designated areas, will also permit geographically restricted retail sales.

In addition, the Class C transitional licence originally introduced to enable slaughter operators to become fully licensed will be phased out. Operators will develop customized plans to transition these facilities to other licences.

The amendments also introduce ticketing by health authorities to ensure compliance. “Through these amendments, the Province is recognizing the importance of existing provincially licensed facilities and the investment they have made to comply with the regulation,” said Chong.

“We’ve seen a number of food-borne disease outbreaks in the last couple of years alone – such as listeria – and we’re all the more aware of the importance of a system that will protect consumers,” said Robin Smith, chairman of the board of the B.C. Food Processors’ Association. “A well-regulated system means we are better able to isolate problems should they occur, and act swiftly to protect the health of British Columbians.”

The MIR came into force Sept. 1, 2004 for all new operators and Sept. 1, 2006 for all existing slaughter operators following the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis and other disease outbreaks.

The number of provincially licensed slaughter facilities has increased from 14 in 2004 to 37 in 2010. Since 2006, government has provided more than \$11.9 million to support industry's transition to the new requirements and to ensure this sector remains viable.

For more information on the MIR and the licensing process visit:
www.hls.gov.bc.ca/protect/meat-regulation/.

-30-

Media Contact: Jeff Rud
 Communications Director
 Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
 250 952-2387

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.

BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release
2010HLS0024-000457
April 23, 2010

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

NEW LICENCES EXPAND SLAUGHTER CAPACITY

Introduced in 2004, the Meat Inspection Regulation's objectives were to:

- Ensure food safety.
- Strengthen the meat processing sector.
- Rebuild consumer and international confidence in B.C.
- Adopt an outcomes-based approach to regulation.

The MIR ensures that animals are humanely handled and slaughtered; carcasses are processed hygienically; and that meat is stored and packaged in ways that reduce contamination risks.

The new graduated licensing approach includes several levels of slaughter operation for provincially licensed facilities:

- Class A facilities include slaughter and 'cut and wrap' services.
- Class B facilities include slaughter only.
- Class C was temporarily introduced in 2007 to make it possible for many slaughter operators to become fully licensed. These licenses are now being phased out.
- Class D - Retail Sales – permits direct producer sales to local consumers and to retail establishments with geographic restrictions. Restricts production to between one and 25 animal units (approximately 11,350 kg live weight).
- Class E - Direct Sales – will permit direct producer sales to local consumers. Restricts production to between one and 10 animal units (approximately 4,540 kg live weight). These will also be limited to the designated geographic areas but may also be available to other rural and remote areas of the province on a case-by-case basis.

Class A and B slaughter licences became mandatory for all provincially licensed slaughter facilities under the MIR in 2004.

Un-licensed slaughter for personal consumption has always existed in the province and will continue. As well, federal licences are required for slaughter facilities that export out of province, and are overseen by the federal government.

In 2009, a MIR Transition Strategy was announced to further support operators in the transition to full licensing under the MIR. The strategy included:

- Additional funding of \$3 million for existing licence-holders to assist with construction costs, bringing the total to \$11.9 million provided through the Meat Transition Assistance Program (MTAP).
- Expanding the ticketing authority of environmental health officers and meat inspectors to better deal with illegal meat sales and lack of compliance with food safety practice requirements.

- Phasing out Class C transitional licences to support long-term food safety objectives and ensure the economic viability of fully licensed facilities.
- Collaboration with small rural operators to determine minimum food safety requirements and a viable licensing approach for producers in isolated areas with limited capacity to establish a fully licensed abattoir.

Today's announcement is the final step in the Transition Strategy, and recognizes the unique challenges faced by smaller communities with limited slaughter capacity, population density and animal numbers.

-30-

Media Contact: Jeff Rud
 Communications Director
 Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
 250 952-2387

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.