

Livestock Sales for Meat: Rules and Regulations

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Livestock producers are continuing to explore consumer direct sales, taking advantage of the “Farm to Fork” movement and as a means to increase profitability. In addition, the novel coronavirus in 2020 disrupted markets and processing capacity, while creating a great public recognition of food security. A question many livestock producers are asking is: How can I sell my livestock directly to consumer for consumption?

If you plan to sell your livestock outside of traditional markets it is important to understand how you can do this legally. Although it might be a common practice to do a ranch-slaughter at the time and location where the market animal is sold, this is often not a legal way to slaughter the animal. The regulations behind this practice are not well known, so below is a list of legal ways to sell and slaughter a market ready animal and illegal practices that must be avoided.

LEGAL (cattle, sheep, goats, swine)

- The ready market animal is sold and the buyer transports the animal to his/her own property where the animal is ranch-slaughtered, fed longer
- Beef market animals are sold and ranch-slaughtered on the seller’s property. There is a limit of five or fewer cattle that can be slaughtered within a calendar month. **See



*Image 1:
Steer on
farm butcher*

Mobile Butcher

Mobile custom slaughterers licensed by the Department of Food and Agriculture (FAC § 22001.5) to butcher animals on farm and authorized to transport carcass to custom processors. For a list of local mobile butchers visit www.cdffa.ca.gov/AHFSS/Livestock_ID/pdfs/MobileSlaughterDirectory.pdf.

Cattle Specific Requirements

**In 2018, a law was passed that provides an exemption allowing up to five head of cattle to be slaughtered on the seller’s property in a calendar month.

**ALL cattle (steers) MUST be inspected by the California Bureau of Livestock Identification prior to being sold and/or butchered (FAC § 21051). You can find your local Brand Inspector here <https://apps1.cdffa.ca.gov/brandinspector/>

In 2019, the law was amended to require record keeping of all sales for one year (purchaser and head slaughtered monthly).

- Cattle Specific Requirements note on this page. (FAC § 19020 and 9 CFR § 303.1).
- The market animal is sold and purchased by a family member who owns the same property where the animal was raised and then ranch-slaughtered.
- The market animal is sold and transported by the seller or the buyer to a CDFA-inspected facility where it is slaughtered, and possibly processed (cut and wrapped)
- The market animal is sold and transported to a USDA-inspected (United States Department of Agriculture) facility where it is slaughtered, and possibly processed (cut and wrapped) for the buyer or is sold.
- The market animal is transported to a USDA-inspected facility where it is slaughtered and the carcass is transported to a CDFA-inspected facility where it is processed and the meat is sold only from that facility.

ILLEGAL (cattle, sheep, goats, swine)

- The market animal is sold and ranch-slaughtered on the seller's property. **See Cattle Specific Requirements note above.
- The market animal is sold and transported to another property, other than the buyer's property, where it is ranch-slaughtered.
- The market animal is ranch-slaughtered and the carcass is transported to a CDFA or USDA-inspected processing facility where the carcass or the cut and wrapped meat is sold.
- The market animal is transported to a CDFA-inspected facility where it is slaughtered, and possibly processed, and the carcass or cut and wrapped meat is sold.

Legal Uses of Meat

In order for meat or meat products to be sold, the animal must be slaughtered at a USDA-inspected facility. Anytime an animal is slaughtered by any person or facility other than a USDA-inspected facility, the meat enters a "custom exempt" process and must be labeled "NOT FOR SALE." That label means that under no circumstances can the meat from that animal be sold. This meat must be used exclusively by the owners, members of the owner's household, the owner's employees, and nonpaying guests (FAC § 900.3 and § 908.5).



*Image 2:
Steer carcass
evaluation*

Goat & Sheep Official ID

Sheep and goats sold should have an official Identification (ID) "Scrapie" tag. The eartags must be a device or identification mark approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and provide a unique identification number for each animal. (FAC § 760.6).

If you are selling live animals to a business that will then re-sell the live animals, carcasses or meat products, it is advisable to check that the buyer is bonded and insured to protect sellers. Bonds are required for meat packers with annual livestock purchases at or above \$500,000.



*Image 3:
Custom exempt
meat image
with label
indicating “Not
for Sale”*

The UC ANR publication [Selling Meat and Meat Products](#) is a free download and is a useful reference and guide in understanding federal and state regulations for livestock slaughter and meat processing. A more comprehensive guide is this [USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service publication](#).

Sales by Weight

If you choose to sell your animal by weight, you are required to use a sealed scale, certified by your County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures (BPC §12501.1). Additionally, a licensed weighmaster is required when the weight is used as the basis for either the purchase or sale of a commodity (animal) (BPC § 12700.)

Drug Residue and Withdraw Regulations

Drugs intended for food production animals should be used in accordance with label instructions (including the species, production class, indication, dose, volume per injection site, administration route, administration frequency, and treatment duration listed on the label). Label instructions include an Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved withdrawal period that must be observed before the food animals go to slaughter. The withdrawal period is defined as the time when the animal was last treated with the drug, to when the animal can be slaughtered for food. “The withdrawal period allows for the drug (or parts of the drug) in the edible tissues of the treated animal to get to levels that are at or below the tolerance. It is

illegal for dairies, livestock dealers, and other animal producers to sell an animal for food with tissue residues above the set tolerance” (Federal Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act)

In 2018, California implemented regulations pertaining to judicious use of antimicrobials in livestock. Thus, livestock producers are required to establish a valid Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR), and for treatment to be provided to an animal through a valid VCPR (16 CCR § 2032.1). Furthermore, a VCPR is required for a veterinarian to administer, prescribe, dispense or furnish a drug, medicine, appliance, or treatment of whatever nature for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture or bodily injury or disease of an animal.

Before providing any medicine to livestock destined for the food chain, make certain that the medication is labeled for that particular species and for consumptive livestock. Off label medication can only be used under the supervision of a veterinarian, and they will establish a substantially extended withdrawal period supported by appropriate scientific information (Title 21: §530). In addition, the FDA has a list of drugs prohibited from extra-label uses in food-producing animals (Title 21: §530.41)

Environmental Concerns with on-Farm Butchering

Butchering on-farm can result in offal, or non-consumptive animal parts. When conducting on farm butchering, maintain distance from property lines and ensure that offal does not enter into any river, creek, pond, reservoir, or stream (HSC § 116975).

An additional consideration if you are raising grain finished livestock, there may be other environmental regulatory requirements. For example, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region has a “Confined Bovine Feeding Operations,” where cattle (cows, bulls, steers, heifers, or calves) representing 6 or more Animal Units are confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any

12-month period, and where vegetation is not sustained over a majority of the confinement area during the normal growing season (R5-2017-0058). You will want to check with your regional water quality control board for region-specific regulations on confined animal feeding operations.



*Image 4:
Waterways can pose an environmental concern when butchering on farms.*

Raffling animals, whether it is livestock equine or pets, is a trending scheme on some social media sites. While raffles by individuals may be legal in some states, in California, the law prohibits a lottery or raffle by an individual. A lottery is any scheme for the disposal or distribution of property by chance, among persons who have paid or promised to pay any valuable consideration for the chance of obtaining such property or a portion of it, or for any share or any interest in such property, upon any agreement, understanding, or expectation that it is to be distributed or disposed of by lot or chance, whether called a lottery, raffle, or gift enterprise, or by whatever name the same may be known. Additional information is available through the California Attorney General's Office.

Marketing and Advertising

When marketing directly to consumers (e.g. neighbors, mailings, social media) livestock producers may seek to share information on the process and methods of raising the animal. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service is the agency responsible for ensuring the truthfulness and accuracy in labeling of meat and poultry products. When you decide to market your animal, investigate the meaning of labeling terms (e.g. organic, natural, no antibiotics, no

hormones) you use to promote your animal. You can learn more at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/>.

To enhance potential customer awareness and understanding of whole animal meat purchases here are some useful fact sheets:

[How much meat to expect from a beef carcass, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, PB 1822](#)

[How much meat to expect from a carcass – A consumers guide to purchasing freezer meats.](#)

[The butcher kept your meat? Penn State](#)

[Beef and Pork Whole Animal Buying Guide – Iowa State University](#)

[Pork Processing Options for Consumers – Kansas State Research and Extension.](#)

[A Buyers Guide for Animals at the local fair – University of Maryland Extension](#)

Regulatory References

Regulations can change, this document was developed in August 2020. Before producing meat or poultry product, review current regulations or consult with someone familiar with meat and poultry regulations.

Federal Regulation cited in this publication are most easily accessed at this web site:

www.ecfr.gov

The California Food and Agricultural Code and Penal Code can be found at this web site:

<http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml>