



On-Farm Slaughter - What you need to know

The Vermont landscape is abundant with farmers supplying their communities with locally raised, slaughtered and processed meats. For generations Vermonters have relied upon friends and neighbors for their meat supply, however as the industrialized food system has grown larger, rules have been crafted to “protect” the public from potential dangers. These rules have weakened the Vermont meat slaughter and processing infrastructure and made it challenging for Vermont farmers to comply with these industrial scale regulations without making significant capital investments and going into debt. Rural Vermont believes that having community scale-appropriate regulations will help grow the market for farm fresh meat while simultaneously protecting our food supply and enabling farmers to continue Vermont’s cultural heritage.

Improvements to the On-Farm Personal Slaughter Regulations 2019

Rural Vermont’s top priority for the 2019 legislative session was to remove the July 1, 2019 sunset of the on-farm-slaughter law and to make meaningful improvements to the law. We successfully advocated to add our improvements to a large rural economic development bill, [Act 83](#) (*on-farm slaughter provisions begin on page 8*). The new law amended 6 V.S.A. § 3311a to extend the sunset of the law to July 2023, allow farmers to sell live animals raised on their farm to more than one person, and for carcasses to be halved and quartered at the time of slaughter. It also requires that the on-farm slaughter be performed according to humane standards that already exist in Vermont law. Selling to multiple owners is a change that Rural Vermont and the on-farm slaughter community has been seeking for many years.

Three pathways to slaughter four legged animals in Vermont:

1. On-Farm-Slaughter

Farmers can sell a living animal to multiple persons who then either slaughter the animal themselves on the farm or hire an itinerant slaughterer to do so. Farmers are not allowed to slaughter the animals themselves and can only assist in the slaughter to the extent of providing space, equipment and appropriate disposal of the offal. Meat from an on-farm slaughtered animal cannot be sold, traded or gifted after slaughter and is for personal use the owners of the carcass, their family, employees and/or nonpaying guests. This is one of the personal use exemptions to the licensing and inspection requirements of the law. On Farm Slaughter does not require a “custom” or inspected slaughter facility.

2. Custom Slaughter Facility

According to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, a custom facility is a building that can be located on a farm, and gets a license from - and is inspected by - the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to verify that certain sanitary standards are being met. These standards include requirements such as washable walls and floors, hot/cold potable running water, sufficient light, ventilation, plumbing, drainage, and sewage disposal. If livestock is processed in a custom facility, the individual packages of meat will be stamped “Not for Sale” and must be returned to the owner(s) of the livestock for their personal use, their employees, and/or their non-paying guests.

3. USDA Inspected Slaughter Facility

An inspected facility is a building where livestock are killed in the presence of a USDA inspector. The facility must meet certain standards and follow certain procedures. If livestock are processed in an inspected facility, the meat may be sold from the farm, at farmers’ markets, to restaurants and retail establishments, and it may be sold in pieces, such as ground meat, steaks, tenderloin, etc. It must be labeled according to USDA standards to be sold in this way.

Requirements for On-Farm-Slaughter

Updated with the recent amendments of 2019 (see *) to the on-farm-slaughter provision in 6 V.S.A. § 3311a,

- (1)* The NEW law allows for multiple owners to purchase livestock while alive from a farmer who is raising the livestock.
- (2) The farmer is [registered](#) with the Secretary of Ag as selling livestock for on-farm-slaughter. The registration is at no cost, does not make you subject to inspection, and must be renewed at the beginning of every calendar year.
- (3) The farmer is required to [keeps records](#) of each on-farm slaughter conducted and report quarterly to the Secretary of Ag on a form provided by the Secretary. Due dates for quarterly reporting are:
 - First calendar quarter ending March 31: report due on or before April 15
 - Second calendar quarter ending June 30: report due on or before July 15
 - Third calendar quarter ending September 30: report due on or before October 15
 - Fourth calendar quarter ending December 31: report due on or before January 15.
 - ➔ If a farmer does not report conducted slaughter to the Secretary of Ag, enforcement actions may include a suspension of the authority to sell animals to an individual/s for on-farm-slaughter.
 - ➔ You can find the online registration and record keeping forms at <https://agriculture.vermont.gov>, by following these steps from the homepage: select Food Safety, then Meat & Poultry Inspection, then Forms & Applications.
- (4) The individual/s who purchased the livestock or an itinerant slaughterer they hire performs the act of slaughtering.
- (5) With approval from the farmer who sold the livestock, the slaughter must occur on the farm where the animal was raised.
- (6) The slaughter is conducted under sanitary conditions, which means the site on the farm is clean and free of contaminants and designed in a way to prevent the occurrence of water pollution and the adulteration of the carcass or the meat.
- (7) The farmer does not assist in the slaughter of the livestock. That means a farmer may not perform the act of slaughtering or butchering an animal. It does not prevent the farmer from providing a site on the farm for slaughter, implements for slaughter, or the service of disposal of the offal from slaughter.
- (8) Not more than 15 swine; 5 cattle; 40 sheep or goats; or any combination of swine, cattle, sheep, or goats, provided that not more than 6,000 pounds of live weight of livestock are slaughtered per year.
- (9)* The NEW law allows for the carcass to be halved or quartered by the owner(s) or itinerant slaughterer. The meat cannot be sold after slaughter, and is for the personal use of the owners of the carcass, their employees and/or nonpaying guests.
- (10) The livestock is slaughtered according to a "humane method", as that term is defined in 6 V.S.A § 3131 (6) meaning:
 - A method whereby the animal is rendered insensible to pain by mechanical, electrical, chemical, or other means that is rapid and effective before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.
 - A method in accordance with ritual requirements of the Jewish faith or any other religious faith whereby the animal suffers loss of consciousness by anemia of the brain caused by the simultaneous and instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries with a sharp instrument.

How Can You Help?

- Reach out to us if you are or want to be active regarding on-farm-slaughter!
 - We are looking forward to extending our network of supporters for this important practice that provides more opportunities for direct farmer to consumer relationships.
 - We welcome your questions and are available to help you understand the complicated and confusing regulatory world around On-Farm Slaughter
- Feed back: If you are actively engaged in on-farm-slaughter, please give us feedback on the current amended regulations, our outreach work, and how to improve both further.
- Registration and Reporting: The Legislature and the Agency of Agriculture have made it clear that without evidence of compliance with reporting requirements from farmers - they will not continue to support this law beyond 2023 when it will need to be renewed. Hesitation to comply with paperwork on this issue is understandable given the history of conflict in terms of policy, enforcement, and culture; and lack of support for farmers, consumers, and itinerant slaughterers interested in engaging in this practice. The VT Agency of Agriculture has assured Rural Vermont and the Legislature that they will approach this issue first as partners in education and outreach to farmers and others engaging in this practice, as opposed to as regulators responding with punishment and fines. At this point, farmers registering and reporting will help to ensure the continuation of this law, our ability to further improve it, and our understanding of the prevalence of this practice around the State. We welcome your feedback on the reporting and record keeping requirements.
- Sign up for Rural Vermont's email list and volunteer to help promote our campaigns!
- Join Rural Vermont as a dues paying member at www.ruralvermont.org.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

- Let us know if there are questions, concerns, resources, etc. that you have or need.
- Let us know if you need help finding itinerant slaughterers in your region.
- Contact Rural Vermont and ask us to mail you a hard copy of the VAAF registration and record keeping forms.

46 East State St. Montpelier VT | (802) 223-7222 | ruralvermont.org | Look for us on FB & IG