



**Consumer Protection Division
Policy, Standards, And Quality Assurance Section
Public Sanitation And Retail Food Safety Unit**

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**

SUBJECT: Custom Processing Guidelines

Custom Processing is the processing of game animals (such as deer, wild hog, quail, etc.) by an operation for a hunter for the hunter's personal use.

Indigenous game animal processing by independent operators in Texas is common practice during hunting season. How that firm operates in Texas depends on several factors. A firm under local regulatory jurisdiction should contact that jurisdiction for specific information. Firms that operate under the regulatory jurisdiction of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) will see a regulatory overlap between DSHS Foods Group and DSHS Food Establishments Group. In addition, questions and guidance also are addressed by DSHS Meat Safety Assurance Unit. This guidance document provides licensing requirements and guidelines to ensure a safe product will be distributed to the consumer.

- **No license or inspection required for the following:** An operation that only processes indigenous game meat that is returned directly to the hunter for the hunter's personal use and is located in an area that falls under the regulatory jurisdiction of DSHS. There are no retail sales and no meat is wholesaled. There is no state Meat Safety Assurance inspection of other meat at the firm. This firm is conducting a personal service for the hunter but may request a voluntary inspection by submitting a Food Establishment Inspection Application (EF23-12972) and Establishment Inspection Fee. The inspection will be conducted by Public Sanitation and Retail Food Safety Group or a Manufacture Foods Group. The application (EF23-12972), may be downloaded from the Foods Licensing Group website at: <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/forms.aspx>

- **An inspection is required for the following:** An operation that processes indigenous game meat for the Hunters for the Hungry program or other non-profit food bank. The indigenous game meat that is brought to the firm for processing will be donated to the Hunters for the Hungry or other non-profit food bank. This type of operation must be inspected and submit the inspection fee for a retail food establishment. The inspection will be conducted by Public Sanitation and Retail Food Safety Group or a Manufacture Foods Group. The application may be downloaded from the Foods Licensing Group website at: <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/forms.aspx>

- **Either a food manufacturer’s license or a retail food establishment license is required for the following:** A firm that conducts processing of other non-amenable meat or poultry products, or conducts another type of food operation. The appropriate license - a food manufacturer’s license or a retail food establishment license (if under DSHS jurisdiction) - will depend upon the gross annual volume of sales, consistent with the DSHS licensing requirements. A food manufacturer’s or retail food establishment license may be downloaded from the foods licensing group website at: <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/forms.aspx>
- **A variance must be submitted to the Food Establishments Group for the following:** A retail food establishment that is licensed with DSHS and wants to custom process indigenous game animal for personal use. The variance requirement is based on a provision of the Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER), Section 228.76 relating to Specialized Processing Method. The firm also must submit a Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) plan with the variance request. A copy of the TFER may be downloaded from the Food Establishments Group website at: <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/laws-rules.aspx>

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- The processing of indigenous game animals is not under the regulatory authority of the Meat Safety Assurance Unit (MSA). A firm that is under the regulatory authority of MSA is allowed to custom process indigenous game animals for personal use. The game animal must be processed at a separate time, stored separately and all equipment must be cleaned and sanitized according to regulations before any amenable meat products are processed. If the product contains meat from an amenable species, the meat from the amenable species shall be from an approved source.
- The following minimum requirements must be followed by any operation that processes indigenous game animal:
 - a. All carcasses must be stored at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or less. Accurate thermometers must be available in each cold storage unit. The processor should have a method of record keeping demonstrating when a carcass was received, processed and returned to the owner.
 - b. Co-mingling of different species is not allowed. All animals with “hide-on” should be clean, separated, and bagged to include the antlers and hooves. Skinned carcasses must be trimmed and washed to remove any gross contamination. Taxidermy operations must be completely separate from the

processing facilities.

- c. Processing equipment must be cleaned and sanitized between species.
- d. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) apply to the building and grounds and the cleaning and sanitizing of equipment. The facility must have hot and cold running water, an approved water source, proper wastewater disposal, pests under control, and toilet facilities available for employees. Additional requirements may apply if the firm has a DSHS license. A copy of the Current Good Manufacturing Practice and Good Warehousing Practice In Manufacturing, Packing Or Holding Human Food Rules (25 Texas Administrative Code Part 1, Chapter 229, Subchapter N) can be found at the following web site:

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foods/default.aspx>

- e. Packages of processed indigenous game meat must be labeled with the name of the product; the statement "not for resale"; the name and address of the processor; and a list of the ingredients, if the product contains two or more ingredients, such as sausage.

- Contact information the Foods, Food Establishments and Foods Licensing Groups.

Foods Group:

(512) 834-6670

Fax: (512) 834-6681

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foods/default.aspx>

Food Establishments Group:

(512) 834-6753

Fax: (512) 834-6683

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/>

Foods Licensing Group:

(512) 834-6626

Fax: (512) 834-6618

foodslicensinggroup@dshs.texas.gov

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/permitting.aspx>