



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

January 11, 2013

2013-R-0024

## LIVESTOCK SLAUGHTER LAWS IN CONNECTICUT

By: Kristen L. Miller, Legislative Analyst II

You asked (1) for a summary of Connecticut laws concerning livestock slaughter, (2) whether a person can slaughter livestock he or she owns (i.e., personal slaughter), and (3) for examples of other states that specifically provide for personal slaughter in statute.

### SUMMARY

Federal and state laws govern the slaughter of livestock (e.g., cattle, sheep, swine, and goat) and poultry. Meat and poultry slaughterers and processors are regulated by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act. Custom slaughter operation and personal slaughter practice are generally exempt from the acts' inspection requirements. Meat derived from livestock and poultry slaughtered either by custom or personal slaughter cannot be sold.

Connecticut law requires animals to be slaughtered by an approved method. The state also manages a program that helps custom slaughter facilities meet requirements for sanitation, health, and appropriate slaughter methods. Personal slaughter is not regulated but may be subject to animal cruelty, public health, environmental protection, and nuisance law, regulations, and ordinances. Connecticut's Department of Public Health regulates slaughterhouse construction and sanitation.

States such as Maryland and Utah have laws exempting personal slaughter from certain inspection and preparation requirements. But both states allow the meat or poultry to be consumed only by the owner or his or her immediate family members, nonpaying guests, or employees.

Additional information about processing and selling meat and poultry in Connecticut is available in the Department of Agriculture's *Farmer's Guide to Processing and Selling Meat or Poultry in Connecticut* at [http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/marketing\\_files/farmers\\_guide\\_to\\_processing\\_and\\_selling\\_meat\\_and\\_poultry\\_in\\_ct.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/marketing_files/farmers_guide_to_processing_and_selling_meat_and_poultry_in_ct.pdf).

## **BACKGROUND—APPLICABLE FEDERAL LAWS**

Slaughter and processing facilities in Connecticut and other states must be inspected by the USDA's FSIS, which sets standards for food safety and inspects and regulates all raw beef, pork, lamb, chicken, and turkey sold in interstate commerce under the federal Meat Inspection Act (MIA) ([21 U.S.C. § 601 et seq.](#)) and the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) ([21 U.S.C. § 451 et seq.](#)).

Custom slaughter operations (a business providing slaughter and processing services to animal owners) and personal slaughter (the slaughtering and processing of animals by the animal's owner) are generally exempt from the acts' inspection requirements ([9 C.F.R. § 303.1](#)). But meat from custom slaughtered animals or animals slaughtered by their owner may be consumed only by the owner, his or her household members, non-paying guests, and employees; it cannot be sold.

The federal Humane Methods of Slaughter Act controls the slaughter and handling of livestock at packing plants and requires that livestock are slaughtered humanely (i.e., rendered insensible to pain by certain methods before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut or by slaughtering according to certain ritual requirements of a religious faith) ([7 U.S.C. § 1901 et seq.](#)). FSIS enforces this act.

## **CONNECTICUT ANIMAL SLAUGHTER LAWS**

### ***Approved Slaughter Methods***

Connecticut law prohibits a person engaged in business as a slaughterer, packer, or stockyard operator from causing or permitting any animal to be slaughtered in a manner that allows the animal to feel pain. Similarly, a person is prohibited from putting or causing an animal

to be put in a position for slaughter by an unapproved restraint method. A person is considered to be engaged in the business if he or she slaughters an animal for sale or trade ([CGS § 22-272a\(a\)](#)).

The approved methods include:

1. rendering the animal insensible to pain by gunshot or mechanical, electrical, chemical, or some other rapid and effective method approved by the consumer protection commissioner or the USDA secretary under the federal Humane Slaughter Act of 1958, as amended ([7 U.S.C. § 1901-1906](#)); and
2. restraining the animal to allow a cutting stroke to be administered quickly and efficiently without excitement or discomfort by (a) an approved pen that firmly encloses the animal; (b) an approved body harness to lift, support, and cradle the animal; or (c) some other approved method that causes no unreasonable or unnecessary pain ([CGS § 22-272a\(b\)](#)).

To protect religious freedom and ritual slaughter, the law considers the handling and preparation of livestock for ritual slaughter to be humane; an approved slaughter method is not required for this practice ([CGS § 22-272a\(e\)](#)).

A person who uses an unapproved method is subject to a fine of up to \$500, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both ([CGS § 22-272a\(d\)](#)).

### ***Custom Slaughter***

By law, a custom slaughter facility slaughters animals and returns them to the owner of the animal for personal consumption. State law requires the state's DoAg commissioner to adopt regulations for custom slaughter facilities including sanitation standards and animal health requirements. The regulations do not apply to slaughter facilities that are licensed and inspected by the USDA under the MIA or PPIA ([CGS § 22-272b](#)).

Under the law, Connecticut's DoAg operates a Voluntary Custom Slaughterhouse Inspection Program to help custom slaughterers meet the sanitation and health requirements and use approved slaughter methods. Custom slaughter facilities must register with the USDA but are exempt from routine federal inspection. Facilities participating in the program are inspected at least annually by the state DoAg.

## ***Personal Slaughter***

Connecticut does not regulate the practice of animal slaughter conducted by a person on their property for personal consumption. But the practice may be subject to laws, regulations, and local ordinances governing such things as animal cruelty ([CGS § 53-247](#)), public nuisance ([Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 19-13-B1 and 19-13-B2](#)), environmental protection (e.g., waste disposal or pollution), and public health.

## ***Slaughterhouse Sanitation and Construction***

The state's public health regulations regulate slaughterhouse sanitation and construction. The regulations require each slaughterhouse or place where the business of slaughtering occurs, and the implements, to be kept clean and sanitary. Among other things, (1) offal (unused animal parts), refuse, and waste material must be sanitarily disposed of within 24 hours; (2) there must be an adequate water supply to wash walls, floors, and equipment; (3) hides and pelts must be stored off the floor of any room used for slaughtering, storing, or preparing meat; (4) all equipment and containers must be sanitized daily after use; and (5) floors must be sloped and made of a hard impervious material, and rooms must be properly ventilated and well lighted ([Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 19-13-B78 and 19-13-B79](#)).

## **OTHER STATES**

Some states explicitly exempt certain slaughter activity from inspection and preparation requirements, including personal and custom slaughter, in state statute. Examples from Maryland and Utah follow.

### ***Maryland***

Maryland law exempts people from certain meat inspection requirements if they slaughter their own livestock for personal use, or the use of their household members, nonpaying guests, or employees ([Md. Code Ann., Agric. § 4-109](#)). The law also requires the agriculture secretary to adopt regulations exempting from certain inspection requirements people who slaughter poultry they raise for only personal use or the use of their household members, nonpaying guests, or employees ([Md. Code Ann., Agric. § 4-217](#)).

## **Utah**

Utah generally requires people who slaughter animals for human consumption, or who assist someone in slaughtering or processing animals, to do so in a licensed meat establishment. It exempts from this requirement a (1) licensed farm custom slaughterer; (2) retail establishment operating under certain requirements; and (3) person or the person's employee who raises an animal if certain conditions are met. For a person to slaughter an animal he or she raises:

1. the slaughter or processing must not be prohibited by local ordinance;
2. hide, viscera, blood, or other tissue must be lawfully disposed of by removing it to a rendering facility or landfill or by burial, as the law allows;
3. the meat or poultry product from the animal must be consumed only by the person or his or her immediate family, regular employees, or nonpaying guests; and
4. the meat or poultry product must be marked "Not For Sale" ([Utah Code Ann. § 4-32-4](#)).

KLM:ro