

What happens when the audit is completed?

Once the audit has been completed the auditor and the ministry's inspection staff hold a brief meeting with plant management to go over the auditor's report and the overall rating. The timing of this meeting is based on the plant's rating. However, if major food safety risks are identified, they must be addressed immediately.

Rating	Post-Audit Meeting Timeline:
AAA	Within 4 weeks of the audit
AA	Within 4 weeks of the audit
A	Within 4 weeks of the audit
B	Within 2 weeks of the audit
C	Within 1 week of the audit
F	Immediately after the audit

Ministry staff can help plant operators develop corrective action plans to deal with any food safety, animal welfare and occupational health and safety issues identified in the audit.

What if my license is suspended?

If a plant's license to operate is suspended as a result of the audit, a notice of opportunity for a hearing before a director is sent to the plant.

A plant's license may only be renewed once a director is satisfied that the corrective action(s) taken by plant operators to bring the plant's compliance to an acceptable level has been completed.



For more information regarding the plant audit program, please contact:

Food Inspection Branch

Ministry of Agriculture,
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The Meat Plant Audit Program

Information and tips for operators of provincially licensed meat plants



Food Safety is a priority

Food safety – from field to fork – is a high priority for the Ontario government.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is committed to a science-based food safety system that protects public health and safety and supports the competitiveness of the Ontario meat industry.

The safety of Ontario's meat supply is regulated by the Meat Regulation (O. Reg 31/05) under the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001. Meat plants that slaughter and/or produce meat and meat products for sale only in Ontario are provincially licensed and inspected.

Why are plants audited?

Meat plants are audited to ensure that they meet the food safety requirements set out in the meat regulation. These requirements are clearly described in the Standards of Compliance, which are available from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Auditors also assess the plant's compliance with Animal Welfare and Occupational Health and Safety standards. The Standards of Compliance explain the regulatory and inspection requirements of the Meat Regulation 31/05 in plain language.

Who does the audit?

The audit is performed by expert meat hygiene veterinarians who have in-depth knowledge of the meat industry and the audit process. The auditors are under contract with the Food Inspection Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and provide an independent, third party assessment.

How does the audit work?

There are 11 food safety areas in the Standards of Compliance that are assessed to determine the plant rating:

- Premises, Facilities and Equipment of Meat Plants
- Water Used in Meat Plants
- Operation of Meat Plants
- Personnel at Meat Plants
- Slaughter of Food Animals
- Inedible Materials
- Meat Products – Process Controls
- Meat Product Standards
- Inspection Legend, Labelling and Packaging
- Transportation Standards
- Distribution Records, Recall Procedure and Notice to the Public

The rating system

A rating is assigned to a meat plant based on the auditor's assessment of the food safety status of the plant.

Rating	A plant that receives this rating:
AAA	Exceeds regulatory requirements
AA	Generally exceeds regulatory requirements
A	Meets regulatory requirements
B	Meets minimum regulatory requirements
C	Is not operating in accordance with legislative requirements and must make immediate improvements
F	Is not operating in accordance with legislative requirements and cannot operate as a licensed plant. Operations are immediately suspended.

How often will my plant be audited?

All plants are audited once a year although a plant may be audited more often if it is producing a higher risk product or has received an unsatisfactory rating. Plant operators are generally notified of the month their audit will occur.

How do I prepare for an audit?

These tips on good practices are useful prior to an audit and throughout the year.

Start with a walk through the plant –

Generally auditors begin their inspection in the shipping area and follow the process flow in reverse. Looking at the plant operation in this way can give you a fresh perspective. During your walk through, be sure to check overhead structures for potential sources of contamination.

Get rid of the clutter – Get rid of pieces of wood from broken pallets, discarded plastic wrapping and other debris. Good housekeeping greatly enhances the impression the plant makes.

Review key food safety areas – Make sure that good manufacturing practices are being followed in areas where meat products are handled. Sanitation, maintenance and pest control programs should also be up to date and proper records kept. Review the process control throughout the plant to ensure the safety of meat products.

Make sure your paperwork is up to date – Plant operators should ensure that all product records and written protocols and programs are available and up to date.