



SMALL POULTRY/PASTURE POULTRY GUIDELINES

This guidance document is intended to provide general information and the basic requirements needed to obtain a license to operate as a small poultry producer.

Licensing with the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) is required for small poultry producers who slaughter, process, and sell one thousand (1,000) birds or less of their own raising within a calendar year. This includes poultry producers who sell intra-state only and who sell whole raw poultry directly to the end consumer. Raw product can be sold from the producer's farm and/or at a farmers market. Poultry can be sold fresh from the farm within 48 hours of processing, or in a frozen state. Poultry sold at a farmers market can only be sold in a frozen state with a mobile meat license obtained from the GDA Food Safety Division.

Quail is not applicable to the small poultry operation exemption (i.e. $\leq 1,000$ processed in 1 year), as this exemption only applies to domesticated birds (chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, or squabs) as defined in **9 CFR 381.1, Poultry Products Inspection Regulations Definitions**. Quail and other migratory waterfowl or game birds (i.e. pheasant, partridge, grouse, or pigeon) are excluded from the definition in **9 CFR 381.1**, and therefore do NOT qualify for the small poultry exemption. Since the 2016 Georgia quail law was passed, making quail amenable at the state level, all quail sold retail or wholesale is now required to come from an inspected source.

The GDA inspects poultry processing facilities as required by State of Georgia regulations to ensure compliance. An annual license fee of \$100.00 is required for small poultry processors.

Records

The GDA must be notified by the poultry producer at least 48 hours prior to slaughter. Your facility records should include the following information:

- Poultry slaughter dates.
- Number of poultry slaughtered each date and the cumulative total per permit period.
- Temperature control log monitoring poultry cool down and storage (w/ thermometer calibration).
- Annual bacteriological water test results (if applicable).

Basic Minimum Requirements

1. Facility Construction

- During slaughter and plucking, overhead protection and drainable floors are required. Further structural elements, such as walls or screens, may be used to prevent any additional risk of contamination like insects, dust, mud, etc. Further processing and packaging must be conducted in an enclosed, protected area.

2. Water

- An adequate supply of potable water is necessary for poultry processing operations. If using a non-public water system, it must be constructed, maintained, and operated according to GDA requirements. Non-public water sources need to meet drinking standards and the water tested as required.
- The water source and system shall be of sufficient capacity and pressure to meet the water demands of food establishment.

3. Bathroom Facilities

- At least one toilet must be available and conveniently located to the poultry processing area.
- Toilet areas must be kept clean, free of trash and litter, and in good repair. All doors used to enter the non-domestic toilet area must be self-closing and not open directly into the slaughter site.

4. Hand Washing

- Hand washing facilities shall be conveniently located and easily accessible for all employees in the poultry processing area. The hand washing sink must provide water temperature of at least 100°F and equipped with hand soap and paper towels.
- Hands must be properly washed before beginning operations, between each preparation step, after every break, and as frequently as required to prevent contamination.

5. Backflow Prevention

- An air gap is the space located between the fill hose/pipe and the vessel/bucket that is being filled. The air gap must be at least two (2) times the diameter of the fill hose or pipe to adequately protect the water from backflow contamination.

6. Sanitization

- The processing area equipment must be cleaned and sanitized prior to and after slaughtering poultry. All knives and equipment must be cleaned and sanitized as needed to prevent contamination.
- Hot water or chemicals are used for sanitizing equipment. If hot water is used for sanitization, the temperature of the water shall be maintained at 170°F or above. If a chemical sanitizing solution is used, it should be prepared as instructed on the manufacturer's use directions and in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Sanitizing solution in buckets is allowed in your processing area for rinsing and storing wipe down cloths. The solution should be changed every 1-2 hours during processing operations. Appropriate test strips are used to verify the strength of the sanitizing solution.

7. Equipment Wash Sink

- A properly sized 3-compartment sink with hot and cold running water of adequate pressure is required for ware-washing that includes washing, rinsing, and sanitizing processing utensils and equipment.
- The processing area can be cleaned with water hoses, using hot water and soap, followed by a water rinse and sanitizing rinse. Food grade hoses must be used in the processing areas.
- All equipment must be properly stored to prevent contamination between uses.

8. Sewage

- Sewage shall be disposed through an approved public or individual disposal system.
- County or municipal sewer system evaluation may be required to approve a grease trap, or to allow an exemption.

9. Lighting

- Adequate lighting with protective coverings must be used in the processing facility.

10. Employee Health

- Personnel must be authorized to enter the processing facility by the permit holder. Unauthorized persons are prohibited from entering the processing area.
- Personnel are prohibited from smoking, eating or drinking while actively engaged in slaughtering, preparing or handling the poultry.
- Personnel infected with a communicable disease, with open sores or infected cuts on hands, is vomiting or has diarrhea is prohibited from working in your processing facility.
- Personnel must wear clean and adequate clothing. The clothing must be clean at the start of the slaughter-preparation-sale process and changed when the clothing becomes soiled and is no longer suitable for use in the specific part of the process (slaughter, preparation, or sale) in which you are engaged. Hair restraints are required.
- Personnel must remove hand jewelry that cannot be adequately sanitized during processing when handling the poultry. If such hand jewelry cannot be removed, impermeable or disposable gloves may be worn. Food employees will have to keep their fingernails trimmed and maintained with no fingernail polish or artificial fingernails unless wearing intact gloves. Gloves being used should remain in an intact, clean, and sanitary condition.
- Employees' personal belongings and garments must be stored separately and apart from the processing facility.

11. Packaging/Labeling

- Poultry must be packaged in sanitary food grade packaging. The packaging must be stored in a sanitary location that is protected from pests. Proper labeling is required on poultry packages and includes the farm name, address, and safe handling instructions. If poultry is sold by weight, a certified scale must be available.

12. Storage

- All food must be stored in a manner to prevent contamination and inhibit the growth of microbial organisms. Food under refrigeration must maintain an internal temperature of 40°F or below. Frozen food is maintained in a frozen state

13. Waste Management

- Waste from the poultry processing facility includes offal, feathers, and blood.
- Contact the GDA's Livestock and Poultry Division for disposal guidance at 404-656-3665.
- Rules & Regulations of the State of Georgia 40-13-5 Dead Animal Disposal: <https://rules.sos.state.ga.us/gac/40-13-5>
- Natural Resources Conservation Services: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>
- Rules Of Georgia Department Of Agriculture Chapter 40-7-1 Retail Food Sales: http://agr.georgia.gov/Data/Sites/1/media/ag_consumerprotection/regulations/files/40-7-1-Retail-Food-Sales---Effective-Date-10-17-2019.pdf
- Contact your local UGA County Extension Office for handouts and information on composting methods or other acceptable methods of disposal in Georgia: <https://extension.uga.edu/>
- The State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) approves water management and disposal plans.

For questions or additional information, contact the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Division at 404-656-3627.