

WHAT CAN CONSUMERS DO?

- When in doubt about the quality of meat you buy, it is your right to ask the dealer/shop owner if the meat was obtained from a legitimate source, such as an approved abattoir.
- Look out for the stamp of approval on the meat. ("PASSED")
- People who sell meat from illegal slaughtering activities should be reported to the Sub-directorate Veterinary Public Health of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or to the nearest police station.



Stamp of approval on poultry meat

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN ENSURING SAFE MEAT?

- The Sub-directorate Veterinary Public Health of the Directorate Veterinary Services of the Department of Agriculture, is responsible for the enforcement of the Meat Safety Act, 2000 (Act No. 40 of 2000)

To ensure that all meat consumers have access to safe meat from known approved sources, **Veterinary Public Health Officers and Veterinarians of the Sub-directorate Veterinary Public Health**, perform the following functions:

- provide training, technical assistance and health education to communities on food safety; thus empowering them to make an informed choice when consuming meat;
- regular systematic hygiene audits of all red meat, poultry and ostrich abattoirs, as well as sterilising plants which produce animal feed, to ensure that prescribed standards are adhered to;
- structural planning of all red meat, ostrich, game and poultry abattoirs;
- promote abattoir hygiene awareness to meat examiners/inspectors, slaughter personnel, quality control officers and owners of abattoirs, through training; execution of competency checks on meat inspectors/examiners, to ensure good meat inspection practises;
- sampling of meat: to ensure that meat is free of antibiotics and growth hormones and to assess if bacteriological levels on meat are at acceptable levels;
- investigate and control illegal slaughtering in collaboration with the relevant authorities and stakeholders (SPCA, Police Stock Theft Unit, Environmental Health etc.); if

necessary combating the said violation via prosecution of the perpetrators in a court of law;

- export control: inspection of meat & dairy products and verification of accompanying documentation for compliance, for export to various African countries.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sub-directorate: Veterinary Public Health
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VPH CORE ACTIVITIES



Bacteriological Sampling



Export Control



Food Safety Education



Abattoir Planning

Veterinary Public Health (VPH)



Purchasing of safe meat

Safe production of meat ensures healthy consumers. Let's reduce the risk.
BETTER TOGETHER.

WHY MEAT SAFETY?

Meat is an expensive and highly perishable product and unsafe meat may pose serious health risks for the consumer. It is therefore very important to ensure that the meat we eat is safe, wholesome and healthy. How can the public be sure of this? The best way to ensure the meat complies with the above, is to buy meat from shops accepted by the environmental health authorities of your community, this meat is safe, because it comes from an approved abattoir.



DO YOU BUY SAFE MEAT?

DID YOU KNOW? In terms of the Meat Safety Act 2000, (Act 40 of 2000) anyone who is selling meat, coming from an illegal source, is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted in a court of law.

WHAT IS APPROVED MEAT? It is meat obtained from healthy animals which have been slaughtered at approved abattoirs; which have been examined before slaughtering and which the meat has also been inspected after slaughtering by a registered inspector; inspected meat can be recognised by the stamp "PASSED" on each quarter of the carcass.

WHAT IS AN APPROVED ABATTOIR? A slaughtering facility which has been issued with a registration certificate by the Sub-directorate Veterinary Public health.

WHAT PROCEDURES ARE CARRIED-OUT AT APPROVED ABATTOIRS?

- animals delivered are examined by registered inspectors, to ensure that only healthy animals are presented for slaughter;
- animals are humanely stunned in the prescribed manner before the neck veins are cut/severed;
- the slaughter process is performed in such a way that the carcasses bleed properly with very little blood left in the meat; such meat stays fresher for longer and possesses a good shelf life;

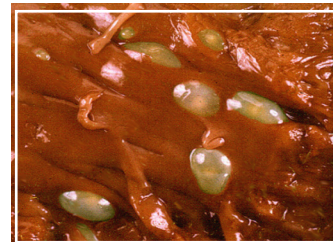
- the removal of the hide/skin/feathers and intestines take place immediately after bleeding;
- a registered inspector will examine the carcasses and offal in a prescribed manner;
- meat fit for human consumption will be passed and marked with a stamp of approval placed clearly on all four quarters, by the registered inspector and in the case of poultry the stamp of approval or id number of the abattoir, must be printed on the wrapping and packing or on labels of each individual carcass or cut portions;
- the meat is then put into a cold room to control the multiplication of bacteria and to lengthen the shelf life of the meat;
- unsafe meat will be destroyed in a prescribed manner.

WHAT IS UNSAFE MEAT?

- Unsafe meat refers to meat that was not slaughtered and checked for diseases at an approved abattoir; such meat can make people sick.



Illegal slaughtering



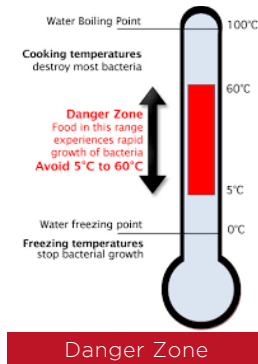
Cysts (measles) in meat



Legal slaughtering



Meat inspection



WHAT DISEASES CAN PEOPLE GET FROM UNSAFE MEAT?

- Measles of cattle and pigs, look like white tomato seeds in the meat; (cysts or bladder worms) if such infected meat is eaten, you get tapeworms in your stomach, which may lead to loss of weight or vitamin deficiencies; pork bladder worms can also spread to the human brain and can cause seizures in humans.
- Malta fever: (Brucellosis) humans become infected by coming into contact with body fluids (e.g. placenta) when an infected animal is slaughtered.
- Tuberculosis: humans can become infected, through wounds in the skin, if the wounds are directly contaminated with the bacteria e.g. during slaughtering.
- Anthrax: (Miltsiekte) humans can contract anthrax by eating infected meat or through the skin via cuts, when infected meat is handled or processed.
- Bacterial contaminants: (Salmonella, E.coli) humans can get food poisoning (symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting, fever, stomach cramps) from eating meat which has been contaminated by bacteria due to unhygienic slaughtering conditions.

WHY HUMANS MUST NOT BUY MEAT FROM ILLEGAL SOURCES?

- Animals are not examined by a registered inspector before slaughtering.
- The animal might have died of a disease before it was slaughtered.
- Animals slaughtered may be infected with diseases that can be transmitted to humans.
- Animals are killed in such a way that they do not bleed properly, which results in meat with a shorter shelf life.
- Incorrect slaughtering techniques may contaminate the meat, with the contents of the intestines/stomach or bladder.
- Unhygienic slaughtering conditions. (no clean running water, no hand washing, no toilets)
- Meat is not chilled, this will result in the multiplication of bacteria which spoil meat.

HOW TO KEEP MEAT SAFE IN YOUR HOME?

- Wash hands with clean running water and soap before working with meat and make sure all cooking utensils and work surfaces are clean.
- Do not work with open sores or cuts on your hands, as germs can contaminate the meat from these sores and cuts.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize cutting boards, knives, utensils and countertops after contact with raw meat.
- Avoiding the **Danger Zone**: raw meat should be held below 5°C and cooked meat should be held above 60°C.
- Place leftover cooked meat immediately in the refrigerator.