

MEAT ACT 1981 TECHNICAL DIRECTIVE 02/105

02/105 Inspection Requirements for Rabbits, Hares and Possums

Meat Techr	nical Directive	Priority	Normal
From:	Judy Barker, Assistant Director (Animal Product Standards)	File:	M800-200, M800-300
Date:	8 November 2002 (1)	Publication Ref:	TD 01/096 and TD 01/140, Man 16

1	Background			
1.1	Technical Directives 01/096 and 01/140 will be cancelled as from the date of full implementation of IS 4, Procurement of Animals for Food. The purpose of this directive is to re-state the ante and post-mortem requirements for rabbits and hares and possums.			
2	Application			
2.1	The requirements in this directive shall apply to all existing operations processing rabbits and hares or possums for human consumption. Note: Existing operations are permitted under the Meat Act 1981, new operations must now comply with the Animal Products Act 1999.			
3	Feral Rabbits/Hares			
3.1	Presentation of Feral Rabbits/Hares for Inspection at a Game Packing House			
3.1.1	Feral rabbits/hares presented for inspection at a game packing house are to be: (a) held chilled; and (b) be examined for abnormalities before skinning; and (c) be skinned and gutted before pre-sorting occurs; and Note: For hares to be marketed in an ungutted state, the additional requirements outlined in section 3.2.1 will apply. (d) pre-sorted by the company as soon as possible, but not later than 24 hours after delivery. This is to be completed before MAF or ASURE NZ Ltd (ASURE) inspection and prior to any further processing (removal of the feet is permitted).			

3.1.2 The lungs, heart, liver and kidneys (includes stomach/intestines in instances where they are presented for inspection) are to be positively identified with the carcass. 3.1.3 A lot consists of all the feral rabbits/hares presented to be inspected for human consumption since the previous MAF or ASURE inspection. All carcasses in a lot are to have an equal chance of being selected for the sample inspection by MAF or ASURE. The company is to keep records of the date and number of feral rabbits/hares in each lot. 3.2 Inspection Requirements 3.2.1 Inspection Hares delivered to a game inspection premises or game packing house uneviscerated, shall be subjected to a pre-dressing inspection by an Inspector to detect disease conditions. The pre-dressing inspection shall include palpation and incision where necessary, but (b) shall not include opening the body cavities. During pre-dressing inspection, the inspector will classify and identify uneviserated (c) hares as: suitable for human consumption uneviscerated with skin-on. suitable for evisceration and further processing subject to passing post mortem inspection. retained for more detailed examination. condemned as unfit for human consumption. 3.2.2 Inspection Procedure Pursuant to Section 50(4) of the Meat Act 1981, an exemption from the requirements for individual inspection by an inspector under the Game Regulations 1975 Regulations 111, 112, 116(1), may be granted by the Director Animal Products (DAP) on an individual premises or process basis if they are satisfied that it is desirable for the purposes of experiment or research and that the following conditions listed under 3.2 Inspection Requirements, 3.3 MAF or ASURE Inspection and 3.4 Inspection Judgement and Sampling of Retained Animals are substituted. Note: Copies of any laboratory reports from pathological lesions submitted for analysis are to be forwarded to New Zealand Food Safety Authority (Animal Products Group), Attn: Senior Advisor (Risk Analysis). A monthly report from each premises assessing the effectiveness of the company presorting procedures and any remedial actions taken is to be forwarded to New Zealand Food Safety Authority (Animal Products) Attn: Senior Advisor (Risk Analysis). 3.2.3 Company Presorting External: the entire skinned body surface and limbs, thoracic and abdominal cavities are to be examined for decomposition and defects including superficial wounds and bruises, fractures, abscesses, etc. Viscera: the lungs, liver, heart and kidneys are to be examined for defects. Feral rabbits/hares presented with missing viscera (with the exception of one missing kidney, or missing stomach and /or missing intestines) are not to be used for human consumption. Dispositions: Carcasses contaminated by gut contents are to be classified as inedible, and may be used for pet food. (ii) Parts of carcasses affected by contamination, wounds, bruises or fractures are to be

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	classified as inedible, and may be used for pet food.		
	(iii) Carcasses contaminated with pieces of projectiles are to be condemned and are not to be used for pet food.		
	(iv) Any carcass and its associated viscera, affected with any condition of the carcass or viscera, other than contamination, wounds or fractures are to be held, separately, and under refrigeration for examination by a MAF or ASURE Inspector. Contact between each carcass/viscera set retained for examination by the Inspector is to be avoided.		
	Product passed company pre-sorting:		
	(i) Carcasses are to have their viscera removed and be held under refrigeration until after the completion of the MAF or ASURE inspection.		
	(ii) Viscera may be stored in bulk prior to MAF or ASURE inspection, in lots of no more than 50 kg.		
	(iii) Offals of rabbits/hares are classified as, and are to be treated as, inedible material so are not eligible for human consumption. The offals may be used for pet food.		
3.3	MAF or ASURE Inspection		
3.3.1	Procedure		
	The MAF or ASURE Inspector is to randomly select and inspect 60 carcasses from the lot which has been deemed to be defect free following pre sorting by the company. A general look at the viscera (in bulk if appropriate) is undertaken to ensure that carcasses are not being kept from animals with defective viscera.		
	Judgement		
	(a) Pass the lot if all 60 carcasses are defect free and there are no major defects detected in the viscera.		
	(b) Fail the lot if defects are found in any of the 60 carcasses or if major defects are found in the viscera. Proceed to 3.3.2.		
3.3.2	Procedure		
	Company is to rework the lot. The MAF or ASURE Inspector is to randomly select and inspect 90 carcasses from the lot.		
	Judgement		
	(a) Pass the lot if all 90 carcasses are defect free.		
	(b) Fail the lot if defects are found in any of the 90 carcasses. Proceed to 3.3.3 and 3.3.4.		
3.3.3	The company pre-sorting procedures are to be re-evaluated. The personnel are to be calibrated against MAF inspection requirements and, at the discretion of the Inspector, the approval of company staff is to be removed until retraining and subsequent MAF or ASURE approval has occurred.		
3.3.4	Inspection after a lot has failed is to continue at the increased sample size of 90 carcasses per lot until consistent company performance is demonstrated (over no less than 3 consecutive lots).		
3.3.5	If during the period of increased sampling following failure of pre sorting procedures a lot should fail as per the criteria in 3.3.2 (b) above, then the company is to rework the lot and the procedures in 3.3.6 and 3.3.7 are substituted.		
3.3.6	The MAF or ASURE Inspector is to re-inspect 100% of the carcasses. Pass the lot if no defective carcasses are found. The requirement for 100% MAF or ASURE inspection is		

4.2.1	Ante-mortem inspection can occur on farm of origin, holding area or at the processing premises. On Farm/Holding Area				
4.2	Ante-mortem Inspection				
4.1	MAF or ASURE Inspection of Possums				
4	POSSUMS				
3.4.4	If the Inspector suspects that any feral rabbit/hare has been exposed to a poison the entire "lot" of feral rabbits/hares from which the carcass was sourced shall be retained and New Zealand Food Safety Authority (Animal Products Group), Programme Manager (Residues) is to be contacted.				
	Note: This requirement may be altered as more information on the disease status of feral rabbits/ hares becomes available.				
3.4.3	Samples of pathological lesions for laboratory examination are to be taken by the MAF or ASURE Inspector from a small number of representative rabbits/hares showing a particular lesion. These are to be submitted to the regional animal health laboratories for diagnosis. Numbers of defective animals, numbers, type and description of defects, and the total number of feral rabbits/hares processed per day are to be recorded. Copies of laboratory reports are to be forwarded to New Zealand Food Safety Authority (Animal Products Group), Attn: Senior Advisor (Risk Analysis).				
	At the discretion of the MAF or ASURE Inspector, carcasses exhibiting isolated localised lesions can have these lesions excised and condemned, the remainder of the carcass may be saved for human consumption.				
	In general terms judgements are based on the principles of post mortem inspection. All animals which show signs of systemic disease are to be totally condemned. These diseases include septicaemia, icterus, metastasised tumours and emaciation.				
3.4.2	Carcasses retained by company management are to be examined by a MAF or ASURE Inspector. The dispositions made on retained feral rabbit/hare carcasses are to be consistent with those made for other species and are to have taken account of the specific information outlined in Appendix 1 .				
	It is envisaged that, as data is received from inspectors and companies it will be analysed, and the judgement criteria applicable in the New Zealand situation will be determined.				
3.4.1	The availability of technical information documenting the disease conditions which occur in New Zealand feral rabbits is limited. The post mortem judgements outlined in Appendix 1 are based on The Australian Code of Practice for Public Health - The Hygienic Production and Inspection of Rabbit Meat for Human Consumption.				
3.4	Inspection Judgements and Sampling of Retained Animals				
3.3.7	Consistent failures after calibration, retraining and removal of approval will result in full MAF or ASURE inspection for 100% of carcasses and viscera.				
	to remain until the company pre sorting procedures have been re-evaluated and re- calibrated against MAF inspection requirements.				

	2.	All such inspections are to be made within the 24 hours prior to sending possums for slaughter.
	3.	During such an inspection the inspector shall carry out an inspection of the possums and cause to be removed any obviously clinically affected possums. Such possums are to be humanely destroyed and disposed of on the farm and not sent to the animal packing house.
	4.	The Inspector shall also examine all relevant disease records of the farm including results of previous post-mortem examinations to make an assessment of the health status of the farm as a whole.
		The assessment must take note of any drugs administered to the possums. Currently there are no animal remedies approved for use in possums, as such, there are no recommended withholding periods. If possums have been treated or it appears that they have been treated, the possum(s) are to be positively identified and retained (alive) as suspects under MAF or Asure NZ Ltd control. Contact the Programme Manager (Residues), New Zealand Food Safety Authority for further details.
	5.	The records of the source of any feral possums are also to be examined. These records are required in order to validate the certification.
	6.	Where the inspector is satisfied that the farm's disease status is satisfactory, he/she may issue an ante-mortem inspection declaration for slaughter within 24 hours of issue of the declaration (Refer Appendix 2). The transport cages used for conveyance of the possums to the premises shall be sealed.
	7.	Where there are signs of disease in the possums, or where the disease history would indicate the presence of any disease that would result in condemnations at the processing house, then a declaration shall not be given. In such cases the Inspector must inform the Inspector at the processing house to which the possums would have been sent of his/her findings. Where tuberculosis is suspected laboratory samples shall be submitted as per section 4.4.1.
4.2.2	At the	Premises
	1.	Where the consignment is accompanied by a declaration of on-farm inspection which can be readily identified with the consignment, then ante-mortem inspection can be confined to detecting injuries received in transport, otherwise a full examination must be carried out. The identification and removal of injured animals may be performed by the company and audited by MAF.
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	4.	The possums shall be observed in the cages either on or off the trucks giving consideration to all the evidence shown with segregation of any which may be suffering from disease. Those showing clinical symptoms or conditions which warrant their being retained for slaughter later as suspects but not sufficiently suspicious to be condemned during the ante-mortem inspection. Refer to section 4.4 for sampling requirements. Every possum suspected of having tuberculosis is to be sampled.

	5.		pects will include possums showing any of the following symptoms, litions, or any combination thereof:		
		(a)	Looking obviously ill – e.g. depressed, debilitated (care should be taken to ensure that this is not just due to confinement in the cages required to convey the possums to the plant).		
		(b)	Poor condition.		
		(c)	Unusual discharges from natural orifices.		
		(d)	Diarrhoea, eg salmonellosis or other enteritis.		
		(e)	Respiratory distress - pneumonia etc.		
	6.	if the	suspects of any given lot may be slaughtered at the end of a day's operation are are adequate facilities for retaining the possums and it is practicable to do the whole lot may be treated as a suspect lot and slaughtered as such ediately.		
	7.	decla	cumented record of ante-mortem examination is to be kept, this may be the aration referred to in Appendix 2 or an procedure equivalent to that in place ther species, refer to IS 4.		
4.3	Post-	morte	m Inspection		
4.3.1	Evisc	Evisceration			
	1.		era, or any part thereof, shall be identifiable with the carcass until carcass viscera have been inspected.		
	2.		n carcass shall be eviscerated and shall be opened so as to expose the ns and the body cavities for examination by an inspector.		
4.3.2	Inspe	Inspection Procedures			
	1.	External			
		(a)	View and palpate the entire body surface (including the oral cavity if processed head on), limbs, axillary regions and groin.		
		(b)	Examine for superficial wounds and bruises, fractures, abscesses, etc.		
		(c)	Any swellings in the axillary regions and groin are to be incised, and examined.		
		(d)	For passume which are being processed "akin an", particular attention shall		
		(4)	For possums which are being processed "skin on", particular attention shall be paid to any abnormalities of the superficial lymph nodes. Incise if necessary.		
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			mesenteric chain consists of 7-8 lymph nodes around the small intestine.
			TB lesions are usually found in the nodes when it is present, but lesions can be in the intestine itself.
		(e)	Kidneys shall be examined by visual inspection and palpation.
			TB lesions are usually large (0.5 cm diameter) and raised. Leptospirosis, which is common in possums, is characterised by multiple red spots in the kidney tissue.
		(f)	The thoracic and pelvic cavity shall be visually examined.
			The inguinal lymph nodes are rarely affected by TB.
	3	Judg	gements
		occu from	availability of technical information documenting the disease conditions which ir in New Zealand possums is limited. It is envisaged that as data is received inspectors and companies it will be analysed, and the judgement criteria icable to the New Zealand situation will be determined.
		place	sease and defect monitoring and surveillance programme similar to that in e for other species is required. Contact: Senior Advisor (Risk Analysis) New and Food Safety Authority for further details.
		inspe are t	eneral terms judgements are based on the principles of post mortem ection. (Refer to Manual 16). All animals that show signs of systemic disease to be totally condemned. These diseases include septicaemia, icterus, astasised tumours and emaciation.
		can	e discretion of the inspector, carcasses exhibiting isolated localised defects have these lesions excised and condemned, the remainder of the carcass be saved for human consumption.
	4.	Spec	cific judgements
		(a)	Any part of the carcass or viscera affected with any lesion, or which is judged to be defective, is to be condemned.
		(b)	Any carcass affected in any part (including viscera) with lesions suspicious of TB is to be totally condemned.
		(c)	Any carcass affected with any condition which in the opinion of the inspector, is generalised, shall be condemned.
		(d)	Refer to IS 5 section 14 for retain rail procedures.
			If the inspector suspects that any possum has been exposed to a poison the entire consignment from which the carcass was sourced shall be retained and the Programme Manager (Residues), New Zealand Food Safety Authority is to be contacted.
4.4	Samp	mpling	
4.4.1	Any possum suspected at ante or post mortem inspection of being infected with tuberculosis shall have samples taken and submitted as described in Manual 16.		
			ations are to be performed as per Manual 16 and to the Director Animal ttn: Senior Advisor (Risk Analysis).
4.4.2		In order to monitor the emergence of new disease, any unusual ante- or post-mortem findings are to be reported by the Inspector via e-mail to peter.vanderlogt@nzfsa.govt.nz	
4.5	Declarations		
4.5.1	The a	inte mo	ortem inspection declaration (see Appendix 2) is to be signed by the

	inspector either at the time of the visit to the premises to perform ante mortem inspection or alternatively, arrangements may be approved in advance by the inspector and the authorised signing officer.		
	Refer to sections 4.2.1 point 6 and 4.2.2 point 7.		
5	Cancellations		
5.1	Technical Directives 01/096 and 01/140 are cancelled and replaced by this Technical Directive.		
6	Implementation		
	Upon receipt of this technical directive.		

	Appendix 1: Post-mortem Disposition for Rabbits and Hares
1	Abnormal Odours Carcasses or viscera may be adversely affected by odours of a sexual, chemical, plant or metabolic origin. If the odour is pronounced or moderate, the carcass is to be condemned.
2	Abscesses, Wounds and Injuries
	Carcasses with abscesses, wounds, sinuses fistulae, cuts and abrasions causing systemic change are to be condemned.
	If a carcass part only is affected and there is no evidence of secondary systemic change, the carcass part is to be condemned, the remainder of the carcass and unaffected carcass parts may be passed for human consumption.
	Slight abrasions of carcass surfaces, are to be trimmed and condemned. The remainder of the carcass may be passed for human consumption.
	Any carcass part contaminated by pus shall be trimmed and the trimmings condemned.
	The remainder of the carcass may be passed for human consumption.
3	Arthritis
	Where any joint is affected with arthritis and there is evidence of systemic involvement, the carcass/viscera are to be condemned.
	Single arthritic joints not part of a systemic condition are to be removed and condemned, the remainder of the carcass may be passed for human consumption.
4	Bruising
	Trim and condemn bruised tissue.
5	Coccidiosis
	Small white spots in the liver. If the carcass is in good condition it may be saved for human consumption.
	Note: The small white spots are similar grossly to Tuberculosis, laboratory diagnosis may be required to differentiate the two conditions.
6	Developmental Abnormalities
	Tissues such as atrophied muscle and abnormally developed tissues are to be condemned.
7	Emaciation
	Emaciated carcass are to be condemned.
	Emaciation can be gauged by the following criteria:
	Generalised wasting of muscles, the carcass may have a loose flabby appearance and the fat tissues especially at base of heart and around kidneys may have a jelly like appearance.
8	Enteritis
	Carcasses affected by mild or acute enteritis with evidence of toxaemia are to be condemned. Mild enteritis occurring in carcasses in good condition may be passed for human consumption if there are no signs of fever.
9	Fever
	Fevered carcasses along with their organs are to be condemned.

10	Fractures
. •	Fractured bones are to be removed along with any surrounding abnormal tissue and condemned, blood is to be trimmed from surrounding areas.
11	Icterus
	Carcasses showing colour changes of the visceral or kidney fat, serous membranes and connective tissues are to be condemned.
12	Listeriosis
	Causes serious loss of condition, with associated hepatitis. Affected carcasses and viscera are to be condemned.
13	Mastitis
	Judgement depends on severity of lesions and condition of carcass. Severely affected carcasses are to be condemned. If lesions are mild or localised, trim and condemn the affected area.
14	Metritis
	Carcasses affected with acute septic metritis are to be condemned. Carcases with mucopurulent vaginal discharge without fever or systemic changes may be passed.
15	Multiceps serialis
	Cystic stage of <i>Taenia serialis</i> of the dog. Cysts may be found in connective tissues of the lumbar region and hind legs. If only one or two cysts are found in a well nourished carcass, remove and condemn the affected part.
16	Nephritis
	Remove the affected kidneys, carcass judgements are to be based on physical condition and evidence of systemic involvement.
17	Neoplasms
	<i>Malignant</i> : If tumours or lesions are present in the carcass or viscera the affected carcass and viscera are to be condemned.
	Benign: If the lesion is localised and the carcass is not adversely affected, remove the lesion including a margin of normal tissue. The remainder of the carcass may be passed for human consumption.
18	Pasteurellosis
	Pasteurellosis is a highly contagious disease. Abscesses can occur in the head or body involving lungs, spleen and genitalia. Judgement depends on the extent of involvement and the condition of carcass. Carcasses with severe pneumonia, fever or multiple abscesses are to be condemned.
19	Pseudotuberculosis
	Nodules resembling tuberculosis in liver, lungs, spleen and intestines. Is transmissible to humans and requires condemnation of affected carcases and viscera. Care must be taken when handling affected carcases and viscera.
20	Ringworm
	Affects only the skin and not the flesh of rabbits, however, it is a zoonotic disease and as such, all rabbits with ringworm are to be handled with care.

21	Salmonellosis
	Can cause enlargement of liver and spleen with carcass congestion, scouring and abortion. Affected carcass/viscera are to be condemned.
22	Spirochaetosis (Rabbit Syphilis)
	Local infection of the vagina of the doe and prepuce of the buck, characterised by a moist scaly crust. It is not transmittable to humans. Remove and condemn affected parts on a well nourished carcass. Condemn carcass/viscera if emaciated.
23	Taenia pisiformis
	Cysts filled with clear fluid occur in the peritoneal cavity. There is usually no effect on the carcass but if pus is present in older lesions, the carcass is to be condemned.
	Trim cysts out and condemn affected tissue.
24	Toxaemia
	Usually found in pregnant does. Meat is dark in colour due to imperfect bleeding. The liver, heart and kidneys are usually swollen and haemorrhagic. Condemn carcass and viscera.
25	Tuberculosis (Tb)
	Rabbits are susceptible to tuberculosis, however, infection is considered very rare.
	Seen usually as small spots in liver and may be confused with coccidiosis. Affected carcasses and viscera are to be condemned.
26	Tyzzers Disease
	Acute contagious disease with haemorrhagic enteritis and necrosis of terminal ileum, large intestine and caecum. Necrotic areas may be found in liver, lungs and also the heart. Usually affects animals up to 12 weeks old. The mortality rate is high.
	Carcasses are usually in poor condition and require total condemnation.
27	Poisoning
	Many poisons do not exhibit post-mortem lesions which are able to be grossly identified.
	Brodifacoum affected carcasses will show generalised haemorrhage, predominantly affecting the subcutis, joints and structures which move eg: muscle, lung, heart and intestines. In some cases jaundice may be a feature.
28	Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD)
	The most consistent post -mortem findings in adult rabbits are a 4 to 8-fold enlarged firm dark spleen, pale swollen liver and wet lungs that fail to collapse. The trachea is filled with a clear, stable froth, which becomes progressively more blood-stained in the hours after death and sometimes exudes from nostrils to superficially resemble epistaxis. The trachea of dead rabbits often has a plum-red epithelium because of the extreme congestion of subepithelial blood vessels. Haemorrhages are not a feature of the disease.
	The carcass and offals to be condemned in all cases.

Ante-mortem Inspection Declaration I hereby certify that I have inspected the possums described below, and in my opinion these animals are fit for slaughter within the next 24 hours. Owner's Name and Address: Number of Possums Identification of Lot (seals on transport cages etc.): Processing Premises: Time and Date of Inspection: Signed: Block Stamp Ante-mortem Inspection Declaration I hereby certify that I have inspected the possums described below, and in my opinion these animals are fit for slaughter in my opinion these a