



# *Inside Ag*

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### **Regulation of Livestock & Wild Game Processors**

The Colorado Department of Agriculture, Division of Inspection and Consumer Services, Meat Program, licenses and inspects approximately 65 meat processing facilities. These facilities are exempt from full time inspection by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These facilities are commonly referred to as “custom-exempt” processors and process meat only for the owner of the animal. The meat products that result from the processing of these animals may not be sold.

Custom-exempt processors provide a valuable service to ranchers and cattle feeders that sell live animals to consumers who have them processed. Some of these livestock processors also process wild game during hunting seasons.

The Meat Program also licenses and inspects approximately 40 wild game processing facilities. Most of these processors are only open during hunting seasons. Big game hunting is a vital industry in Colorado and these wild game processing plants provide an important service to hunters who are successful in harvesting an animal.

All custom-exempt processing facilities are inspected for proper sanitation practices and to ensure that products derived from cattle are handled in compliance with the USDA Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (“Mad Cow”) rules. Inspectors also verify that custom processed, non-USDA inspected meat products are not sold or distributed to the public. Meat processors are also inspected for compliance with record-keeping regulations. Proper record-keeping ensures that animal owners receive meat products from their animals and not from another owner’s animals. Inspectors verify that carcasses are not subjected to contamination from improper storage or processing. Inspectors ensure that inedible meat products are disposed of properly.

For more information regarding meat processor licensing, or to obtain a list of Colorado’s licensed processing plants, please visit the [Meat Program](#) website.

If you are interested in purchasing livestock to have processed for your own consumption, the [Colorado Meat Directory](#), published by the Colorado Department of Agriculture’s Markets Division, provides a listing of producers who sell animals to individuals.