



Meat Safety - Food Premises Program

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Why Is This Important?

- An estimated 1 in 8 Canadians get sick with a foodborne illness, commonly known as food poisoning, every year.
- Foodborne illness cases pose a significant burden due to lost productivity and other related costs.
- A lack of food safety practices can have severe health consequences for consumers and can be fatal.
- Proper handling and processing of meat at licensed premises is an important component of overall food safety.
- In this audit, we determined if government ensures the safety of meat for consumption in New Brunswick.

What We Found

Overall Conclusions

- The Department of Health has processes in place to monitor and enforce compliance with standards to ensure the safety of meat for public consumption.
- Processes are not consistently followed and numerous deficiencies were identified.
- The food premises program is not fully complying with the Province's *Food Premises Regulation*, leading to unaddressed food safety risks.
- In certain circumstances, the public could be at heightened risk of food poisoning.

Unaddressed Food Safety Risks

- Penalties are minimal for operators who fail to comply with standards.
- Unlicensed and uninspected food premises exist in NB.
- New Brunswick meat (3% of meat consumed in the province) is not inspected.

Serious Deficiencies Identified

In the Department files we tested:

- Virtually all new licence files did not comply with the Department's licensing procedures.
- 87% of annual risk assessments of food premises were not on file or the form was not properly completed.
- 81% of inspection files contained deficiencies in performing and documenting inspections of food premises.
- 76% of the revoked licence files lacked documentation indicating that proper procedures were followed.
- 6 of 9 inspectors we observed did not record all violations on the inspection report.

Difficulties Generating Information

The current manual inspection system has significant limitations for capturing inspection results:

- System cannot provide general or useful information on food safety risks.
- Violations are not collectively tracked.
- Reliability of food premises program information is uncertain due to manual system.
- Information is not maintained consistently throughout all offices.