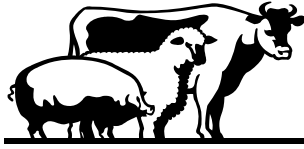


Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company, LLC

*Seymour Vander Veen, President
Edmund Armstrong, Vice President
Hal Hermance, Second Vice President*



*Jim Hayes, Secretary
Jim Sullivan, Treasurer
Kathleen Harris, Coordinator*

923 State Highway 162, Sprakers, NY 12166 (518) 673-5193 office (518) 258-4823 cell
email: nelpsc@frontiernet.net web: www.nelpsc.com

How to Work Successfully with Your Processor

12 Simple Tips

The Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company (NELPSC) was created by livestock farmers for farmers who need assistance working with meat processors. The following recommendations are based on observations and experiences of NELPSC Processing Coordinator Kathleen Harris during her many hours performing processing oversight for clients. For processing clients, most of the processor/ farmer interface is provided by NELPSC. However, for those who prefer to work directly with processors the following are practical tips that can help to create a good working relationship. If you need assistance locating a processor, scheduling appointments, information on meat cuts, or processing oversight, please contact NELPSC.

Before Doing Business

- 1. Research the reputation and performance of the processors you are considering.** Request farmer references for prospective processors. Do they have the capabilities to perform the services that you require (i.e. pattie making, scalding, smoking, cryovac packaging, individual weights on the packages, etc.)? Not all processors will have the capabilities you need.
- 2. Visit the plant before doing business.** Do they have enough help? Is someone there to answer the phone and take cutting instructions? If not, ask the processor what is the best time to phone him. Most likely it will be after the USDA inspector has left for the day. Processors are under financial pressure to complete their work during the 8 hours of free USDA inspection time; beyond the 8 hours plants pay \$60-\$80/hr for overtime.
- 3. For producers who only require slaughter and not processing:** Because the carcasses will be taken out in sides or quarters for further processing elsewhere, do not assume that the plant will provide this service. Many require the entire cutting job because they don't want to give up valuable rail space if they are not getting the entire job.

At Delivery of the Livestock

- 4. Have your animals identified** either by your own farm tags or the tags provided at the slaughterhouse. It is best to leave an index card with your name, phone number and description of livestock delivered with the receiver. If no one is available, most plants have clipboards near the holding pens where the information can be posted. This will aid in accurate tracking of the carcasses.
- 5. At the delivery of live animals certain instructions for slaughter must be conveyed.** While most processing is done by the meat cutter, some is conducted by the slaughterer who may be a different person. Be sure to leave separate written instructions for the slaughterer.
For Beef: Should the oxtail be preserved? Do you want the hanger steak? (There is only 1 hanger steak per beef and it lies along the back bone so when the carcass is split it must be pulled aside, otherwise it gets cut in

half and can only be used for ground beef.) What is the hang time? (Some processors will allow extended hang times, but usually charge \$2 to \$3/day per carcass over and above their usual hang times). **For Lambs and Goats:** If you want your hides preserved for tanning, indicate prior to slaughter so that the slaughterer can take special care not to damage the hide. Some processors consider the hide part of their pay and will not return them, others require pick up within 24 hours of slaughter.

For Hogs: Do you require scalding or skinning (few plants have scalders)? Head on or off? Carcasses split or whole? Most roasting pigs are scalded and left whole with the head on.

6. USDA Regulations require that SRM (specified risk material or spinal column and feather bones) of beef must be removed in carcasses over 30 months in age. The age determination is normally made by dentition (determining age by teeth) however some plants may accept farm calving records that correspond to the animal ID, if the age is questionable. Those records should be presented prior to slaughter. Beef over 30 months will require different cutting instructions.

When Conveying Cutting Instructions

7. Use their cut sheets and make a copy for yourself. Keep instructions simple & avoid changes. Have your phone number on the cut sheet. Ask what day your order is being cut and be available by phone should questions arise. In doing so, the order is more likely to get cut right the first time.

General Tips

8. Be sensitive to their time. Avoid taking the butcher “off the block.” Every time the butcher is interrupted during their work, they lose time butchering while their USDA inspector is there. USDA charges \$60 - \$80 per hour for overtime.

9. Be punctual about delivery & pick up times. Again, many plants are short of help and prefer to take deliveries and pack-out customers after their work is done and inspection is gone for the day.

10. Bring cut sheet when picking up to serve as a check list. Organ meats and products (patties or sausages) are often packed on a different day than the rest of the order and may be stored in other areas and are more apt to be left behind.

11. Bring boxes or coolers: Few plants box your meat for you. For most you will need to bring take out containers; clean coolers are advisable in warm weather. In calculating how many coolers to bring, use the following rule of thumb: one cubic foot of space will accommodate 35-40 lbs of cut and wrapped meat. An average beef will require 12 cubic feet, a pork carcass 4 cubic feet, veal 3 cubic feet, and lamb or goat 1½ cubic feet.

12. Positive feedback and gratitude are appreciated. Slaughtering, processing and packing meat is skilled, hard work. In addition they have the added pressure of USDA inspection and voluminous paperwork. At the end of the day processors appreciate knowing that their hard work and efforts are valued and respected.

NELPSC is made possible in part with funding and support from the New York Farm Viability Institute, the Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation and Development Council, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Rensselaer County Planning and Economic Development Office.