Legal requirements for the sale of Raw Meat, Meat Products and Poultry

This leaflet explains the legal requirements for the labelling of fresh meat and meat products including sausages, burgers and ready meals. It is based on the best information available. It is not an authoritative statement of the law: only the courts can interpret law.

Different labelling requirements apply depending on where you sell your products.

i. If you sell your own meat or make and sell your own meat products loose from your own premises or stall limited labelling is required.

ii. If you pre-pack your own meat or meat products from your own premises these are described as ‘pre-packed for direct sale’ and limited labelling is required. ‘Pre-packed for direct sale’ means that the food is packed and sold by the maker from his own premises or a stall owned or run by him.

iii. If you make your products at one premises and then sell them via other outlets such as local retailers or farm shops you must label the products fully.

iv. If you sell only to caterers then full labelling is required but not all of the information need appear on the packaging itself.

v. Beef is required to be marked with information about its place of slaughter and country of origin.

The same rules apply whether the meat is sold fresh or frozen. Meat includes beef, veal, lamb/mutton, pork, goat and exotic meats such as crocodile, ostrich etc. The information in this leaflet also covers poultry including chicken, turkey, guinea fowl etc.

General requirements
All raw meat and poultry must be sold by net weight.

Stamped trade scales must be used (see attachment) and sales must be made by the kilogram or gram. You may give an imperial equivalent if you wish. If you do so it must be no more prominent than the metric indication.

For retail sales of loose meat from a farm shop or similar the unit price ie the price per kilogram must be displayed either next to the goods themselves, if they are on display, or on a list that is clearly visible to the consumer.

For retail sales from a farm shop or similar pre-packed meat ie meat made up in advance for sale in sealed containers must be marked with an accurate name that describes the species and cut, a weight, a unit price and a selling price.
If it was packed by you and sold from your own premises (or a market stall or a delivery van owned by you) it does not need a ‘use by’ or ‘best before’ date although it is always good practice to provide this information to your customers.

Some seasoning mixes for sausages or marinade powders or liquids for barbecue style meats may use colours that have been found to cause hyper activity in children.

**Sales of meat loose or from the premises on which they were packed**
In general raw meat sold loose need only be marked with an accurate description of its cut and the price per kilo. plus details of any of the 14 allergens used in its preparation.

The allergens are: cereals containing gluten, eggs, fish, milk, sesame, celery, peanuts, nuts, crustaceans, molluscs, soya, lupin, sulphites and mustard.

Some of these allergens may be present in barbecue and other glazes, sausages, burgers and stuffing. Check the labels of the products you buy in. If you do not have full ingredients declarations from your suppliers ask them for it.

If any of these allergens are used in your products you must either label the products individually with the names of the allergens or display a notice advising consumers to ask for further details.
If you propose to give the information verbally it must be accurate and verifiable. You cannot say you do not know or that all products may contain allergens.

Loose sausages or other meat products such as burgers, cooked meats, luncheon meat etc should be marked with an accurate name that is sufficiently precise to distinguish them from similar products.

Loose sausages and meat products must also be marked with their meat content in the form ‘meat x%’.

If you are selling raw beef you must also display the country of origin and be able to provide details of the slaughter house and cutting plant if requested.

**Full Labelling**
If you prepare and pre-pack raw meat, ready meals or meat products but then sell them to a third party for them to sell on to the customer then you must include full labelling.

This includes **all** of the following:

- **A legal name** that accurately describes the product eg pork and leek sausages, lamb burgers, chilli con carne, lamb hotpot etc

  If the meat looks like a slice, joint or portion of meat and contains more than 5% water the name must be accompanied by the declaration ‘with added water’ eg ‘smoked back bacon with added water’

  If you freeze meat and sold it frozen you must mark it ‘frozen on’ plus the date of freezing.
A full list of **ingredients** (where relevant) given in descending order by weight calculated at the mixing bowl stage. This must include a full breakdown of all compound ingredients such as margarine, stock cubes etc that you use in the recipe.

Water must be included in the ingredients list if it is present in the finished product in quantities greater than 5% but it need not be quantified.

If you use oil you must include its source e.g. rapeseed oil, groundnut oil etc

You must also make sure that if any of the following **allergens** are in your products in any quantity that they are clearly listed in the ingredients list and highlighted in some way either by using **bold**, **CAPITALS** or a different **colour**

- Cereals containing gluten, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, nuts, peanuts, sesame seeds, soya, celery, lupin flour, eggs, milk, mustard and sulphur dioxide greater than 10mg/kg.

You will need to be particularly careful with celery, as it is used in many stocks, and mustard that may be in commercial spice mixes.
If you are in any doubt ask your suppliers for a full breakdown of their ingredients.
Sausages and burger mixes will contain the preservative sulphur dioxide

Do NOT include a separate allergens box.

**Additives** must be declared using their category name followed by either their chemical name or their E number e.g. preservative: sulphur dioxide or preservative: E221

A **declaration of meat content**
This can appear directly after the meat ingredient in the ingredients list or separately after the list.
For raw products this is the weight of the finished product divided by the weight of the meat ingredient calculated at the mixing bowl stage.
For cooked products it is the weight of the raw meat as a percentage of the weight of the cooked product.

A meat content declaration is also required on bacon.

The **name and address** of the person responsible for the food information.
This is an address which if used would reach the trader – it may be a name and postcode alone if this will reach the trader.
A phone number or website address may be given in addition to an address but not instead of an address.

An **appropriate indication of durability**
A ‘use by’ date must be used on chilled meat products with a shelf life of less than 3 months and must be in the form ‘use by day/month’ or ‘use by day/month/year’.
It is up to you, as the manufacturer, to decide on the shelf life of your products.
Commercial laboratories can carry out shelf life trials on products to provide you with independent evidence of their safe sale and use.

It is a criminal offence to sell foods after their ‘use by’ date.
A ‘best before’ date must be used on frozen meat products and must be in the form ‘best before day/month/year’.
If you freeze down meat for sale it must also be labelled with the date of freezing.

A ‘best before’ date is also appropriate for cured meat such as bacon or ham.

It is not an offence to sell goods after their best before date although the quality of the goods may be adversely affected.

**Storage instructions** and cooking instructions must be given if it would misleading not to do so.

Country of origin is required on pre-packed raw fresh, chilled or frozen meat from cattle, sheep, pigs and goats from April 2015. This information must include the details of the country in which the animals were raised and the country of slaughter if different.

The net weight in grams – the weight declaration must be at least 4mm
The name of the product and the weight in grams must be visible in the same field of vision ie visible without turning the packaging.

Examples of compliant labels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pork Sausage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingredients: Pork (65%)¹, rusk (contains wheat²), seasoning (salt, celery², mustard², colour:E124³), casings (collagen), preservative: sulphur dioxide²,³, water, &quot;E 124 may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children&quot;.⁴ Use by 13.8.15⁵ - Keep refrigerated at less than 5⁰ P. Iglet, The Farm, Worcester WR1 3TG⁶</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1  meat %
2  wheat, celery, mustard and sulphur dioxide are highlighted as allergens
3  additives declared by category and E number
4  E124 colour warning required
5  use by date required on fresh product
6  name and address of person responsible for the labelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chilli con Carne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingredients: minced beef (25%)¹, tomatoes, water, kidney beans, tomato puree, onions, stock cube² (wheat³ flour, salt, yeast extract, maize starch, flavour enhancer E261, beef fat, celery³, dried beef bone stock, sugar) flour (wheat³, niacin, thiamine, iron, calcium), sunflower oil⁴, chilli, paprika, dried herbs, salt. Best before 5.8.18⁵ – keep frozen at less than -18⁰⁶ Made on the farm by Don Jose Foods, Redditch B99 99B⁷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1  meat %
2  stock cube is a compound ingredient with ingredients listed
3  allergens (wheat and celery) highlighted in bold
4  oil identified by vegetable variety
5. best before’ date required for frozen products
6. storage conditions follow on from durability date
7. name and address of packer

Sales to caterers
If you sell your meat or meat products pre-packed to catering establishments (pubs, cafes, restaurants, school canteens etc) the outer packaging must be marked with:
- The name of the food
- The meat %
- The name and address of the packer
- Colours warning – if relevant

The remainder of the information shown above in the ‘full labelling’ section may be provided in trade documents that are supplied at the latest at the time of delivery.

Standards for meat products
There are legal minimum meat standards for a range of meat products which apply however they are sold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of food</th>
<th>Meat content requirement</th>
<th>Additional requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat pie (uncooked)</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>Type of meat only in name of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat pie 100g-200g (uncooked)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat pie under 100g (uncooked)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat plus veg pie (uncooked)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Meat before veg in name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veg plus meat pie (uncooked)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Veg before meat in name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasty or sausage roll</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork sausage</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>Pork only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork and beef sausage</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Any mixture of meats permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork and chicken</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken and beef etc</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburger</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Pork only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burger</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Beef only or mixture of meats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy burger</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>Beef only or mixture of meats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy burger</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Pork only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you use any products that have minimum meat content requirements as ingredients in meat products eg pork sausages in toad in the hole, the ingredient used must satisfy the legal standard for that food. In this case the sausages would need to contain 42% meat.

Definition of meat
For the purposes of these Regulations ‘meat’ means skeletal muscle only (with its associated natural fat and sinews).
There are presumed maximum levels of fat and connective tissue depending on the species of meat used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fat</th>
<th>Connective tissue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mammals other than rabbits or pigs</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds and rabbits</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you use more than this quantity of fat or connective tissue in your meat products they must be declared separately in the ingredients list.

e.g. Ingredients: pork 65%, pork fat, rusk (wheatflour etc etc)

Offal (heart, liver, kidney etc) does **not** count towards the total meat content although they are permitted to be used as ingredients.

If offal is used it must be included in the ingredients list at the appropriate position by weight.

**Beef Labelling (including Veal)**

Special labelling rules apply to beef whether it is sold loose or pre-packed. The specific information is given below:

Pre-packed beef must be labelled as follows:

- The identification number of the slaughterhouse at which it was killed, in the form 'slaughtered in' or 'sl in' plus the EC number of that slaughter house
- The identification number of the cutting plant at which it was prepared in the form 'cut in' plus the number of that cutting plant. If it has been cut at more than one cutting plant all such numbers
- The country of birth, rearing and slaughter of the animal
- A traceability number that will enable the animal or group of animals from which the meat comes to be identified.

Fresh or frozen minced beef must be marked with:

- The country of origin
- The country of production
- A traceability number as above

These rules are designed to ensure that all beef can be traced back to the individual animal or group of animals from which it originated.

**Animal By Products**

In general it is illegal to dispose of waste raw meat, skin and bones, via normal trade waste collections. However, there is an exemption for quantities of less than 20kg per week which is permitted to be disposed of via normal trade waste channels.

Raw meat and bone waste must be sent to an outlet that is approved to receive them:

- A rendering plant
- Incinerator
- Alkaline hydrolysis plant
- Composting or biogas plant
- Pet food plant

You must keep a record of the waste you send for disposal.

You can find further information about disposal of animal by-products on the DEFRA website


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