

Procedures for the export of fresh meat from South Africa

The procedures to be followed regarding the export of meat are as follows:

- ❖ It is necessary for the exporter to obtain *written permission* from the veterinary authorities of the country of destination for the import of meat. This permission is usually granted in the form of an import permit. On this permit the conditions under which the meat will be allowed entry into the country are specified. These usually comprise both animal health and public health specifications.
- ❖ It is an obligation of the prospective exporter to obtain an import permit. To ensure that the specifications on the import permit are met, the importing country normally requires a written statement of confirmation to this effect. The Directorate Veterinary Public Health only becomes involved if the importing country requires official certification. Exportation will only be officially certified from establishments that comply with national legislation as well as all the requirements set by the importing country. Where no certification by the veterinary authorities is required the meat is exported without involvement of the Directorate.
- ❖ Official certification is usually done in the form of a *health certificate* certifying all the import requirements of the importing country.

International convention mostly dictates that this attestation be carried out by a veterinarian accredited or in the employ of the central veterinary authorities of the country of origin. Certain countries also accept the attestation of a private veterinarian. Only a few countries require no attestation.

Health certificates will only be certified after the requirements of the importing country had been met by the abattoir from where the meat is to be exported. Import requirements vary from country to country. Some requirements deal with the handling of the animals before slaughter, animal health issues, the structure of the abattoirs and cutting plants, the meat inspection procedure, marking and packing as well as many other aspects. These requirements are always stipulated on the import permit.

Before exports can commence, an acceptable health certificate is negotiated between South Africa and the importing country.

- ❖ The abattoir, cutting plant and cold store must comply with the specifications of the importing country. To enable the importing country to establish the origin of the meat, *export identification numbers* are assigned to export establishments. These numbers must be made known to the importing country before exports resume. Every unit of packing that leaves the establishments for export purposes must be marked with the export identification numbers assigned to the export establishments.



The steps needed to gain export approval are summarised as follows:

- ◆ Submit a written application to the Director: Veterinary Public Health and supply the following information:
 - ◇ Name
 - ◇ Name of company
 - ◇ Postal and physical address of the manufacturing establishment
 - ◇ Blueprint of the establishment
 - ◇ Product to be exported
 - ◇ Country of destination
- ◆ A suitable inspection date will be arranged by officers of this Directorate to inspect the establishment.
- ◆ If the establishment conforms to the prescribed norms it will be recommended to the importing country.
- ◆ The importing country might insist that an official from the veterinary authority inspect the plant to ensure that it complies with their requirements. Exports may commence when permission has been granted by the importing country.
- ◆ The export of meat will take place under the supervision of a veterinarian in the service of or accredited by the National Department of Agriculture.
- ◆ Inspectors of the importing country may, from time to time, pay an inspection visit to the various establishments in South Africa, approved for export to that country, to verify compliance with their requirements.
- ◆ Once an establishment has been approved for export, its name and export number are placed on the list of approved export establishments, which is kept and updated by the Directorate Veterinary Public Health.
- ❖ A hygiene management system (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) must be implemented at any establishment wishing to export meat. This system was developed to be implemented, checked, controlled and documented by the management of an establishment. It provides for systemised and programmed hygiene monitoring procedures to be carried out at regular predefined intervals.

The results and corrective actions taken for each prescribed check will be documented for auditory purposes by a veterinarian in charge at the establishment and on an annual basis by a veterinarian of the Directorate Veterinary Public Health of the National Department of Agriculture.
- ❖ At the time of certification the consignment will be sealed in a container and the seal number recorded on the certificate. This prevents unauthorised tampering with products after these were checked and certified. Considering that meat is a perishable product, consignments will mostly be exported under conditions of refrigeration.
- ❖ Upon arrival in the country of destination the import permit and the accompanying health certificate are verified by the veterinary authorities. This is followed by a physical inspection of the meat. The export identification numbers that prove the origin of the meat, the protective packing and the temperature of the meat will be checked. Only if everything is found to be in order will the consignment be released for importation and home consumption.

Any further enquiries can be directed to The Director: Veterinary Public Health,
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