



Specialized Meat Processing Variance and Extended Shelf Life for Retail Establishments

All licensed establishments that produce specialized processed meats to sell at retail:

- Shall have an approved specialized meat processing variance issued before offering product for sale.
- Establishments not having a variance issued shall be:
 - Subject to progressive enforcement action, and
 - Limited to not more than a 7 day shelf-life for reduced oxygen packaged specialized processed meat products per Food Code 3-502.12.

Extended Shelf-Life Implementation

Existing licensed establishments issued a variance must:

- Comply with the extended shelf-life criteria, and
- May implement extended shelf-life immediately.

NEW ESTABLISHMENTS may use the extended shelf-life criteria once these requirements are met:

- ✓ Specialized processing variance has been approved by MDARD.
- ✓ Product shelf life restricted to not more than 30 days.
- ✓ Operating under specialized processing variance for 6 months (next routine evaluation).
- ✓ Demonstration of substantial compliance with variance requirements including record keeping requirements.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL ESTABLISHMENTS

All Establishments producing specialized meat products with an extended shelf-life must:

- Maintain excellent sanitation and overall compliance with food safety laws (Food Law and Food Code).
- Comply with Food Law, section 8107(6) which states:
 - (6) A person who prepackages nonperishable food and chooses to label the food with a date or who prepackages perishable food shall do all the following:
 - (a) Establish a meaningful date that takes into consideration the food quality and characteristics of the food, its packaging, and customary conditions encountered in commercial channels.
 - (b) If the date is the recommended last day of sale, allow a reasonable period after the date for consumption of the food without physical spoilage.
 - (c) Keep a record of the method of determination of the date.

Establishments not meeting these criteria shall receive an administrative review by the regional supervisor in consultation with the food section manager to determine if enforcement action is warranted to assure food safety.

MDARD Extended Shelf-life Criteria

Category	Finished Product Testing	Other*
Heat Treated, Shelf Stable - Cured		
1 ROP / Other secure packaging	Aw and / or pH from each batch meet MDARD table A or B.	1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens"
2 Not Packaged	Aw and / or pH from each batch meet MDARD table B.	1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens"

Heat Treated, Shelf Stable, Keep Refrigerated - Cured		
1 ROP / Other secure packaging	Aw and/or pH of highest risk sample of each type of product from 2 consecutive production batches with results that meet MDARD table A or B criteria, then quarterly testing to support results.	1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens"
2 Not Packaged	Aw and/or pH of highest risk sample of each type of product from 2 consecutive production batches with results that meet MDARD table B criteria, then quarterly testing to support results.	1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens"

Fully Cooked, Not Shelf Stable (Time/Temperature Control for Safety [TCS]) - Cured		
1 ROP / Other secure packaging	Moisture, Salt, and pH from 2 consecutive production batches with consistent result, then annual. Facility must submit to MDARD for review and maintain documentation that verifies product consistently meets the parameters outlined in their shelf-life criteria.	1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens" 2. Enhanced Sanitation SOP 3. Modeling Program Report
2 Not Packaged	Moisture, Salt, and pH from 2 consecutive production batches with consistent result, then annual. Facility must submit to MDARD for review and maintain documentation that verifies product consistently meets the parameters outlined in their shelf-life criteria.	1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens" 2. Enhanced Sanitation SOP 3. Modeling Program Report



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***Other:**

1. Acceptable SOP for "Post-lethality Control of Pathogens" means: That after the cook step rigorous control needs to be demonstrated to prevent bacteria from access to this food. Written procedures that are specific to your establishment are required. These must be maintained on-site for review.
2. Enhanced Sanitation SOP means: written procedures for your specific equipment detailing how the cleaning is to be done. Each step must be spelled out. Log sheets demonstrating that the equipment is checked prior to use for cleanliness must be created and filled out for each day of use. These must be maintained on-site for review.
3. Modeling Program Report means: Temperature control for safety products (those products that must be refrigerated for safety) must demonstrate control of listeria for the shelf life of the product, plus a reasonable period of time for the consumer to eat the food before enough bacteria can grow to cause illness.

Computer modeling programs, such as ComBase (<http://www.combase.cc>), USDA PMP (<http://pmp.erc.ars.usda.gov/PMPOnline.aspx>), or other specific research can be used to show that the shelf life proposed is safe. The products must be analyzed to obtain the data used by the modeling program. Typical things to test for are; percent moisture, percent salt, pH, water activity (Aw), nitrite level (calculated on input of cure). These results must be submitted to MDARD for review for ready to eat not shelf stable products. The tests may be performed by the establishment or by an independent lab.

Abbreviations:

ROP: Reduced oxygen packaging
SOP: Standard operating procedure
Aw: Water Activity
pH: Acidity measurement

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Criteria for shelf stable cured meat products

The MDARD Modified Table of water activity (Aw) and pH shown below are based on Food Code tables A and B and the University of Wisconsin Shelf Stability Prediction model. MDARD considers that these criteria will ensure foods produced by establishments operating under an approved variance will not result in a health hazard or nuisance. The shelf life of shelf stable products is determined by the manufacturer based on organoleptic properties and wholesomeness.

Refrigerate upon opening cured meat products

Shelf Stable cured meat products packaged in secure packaging without opportunity for cross contamination and marked "Refrigerate for Safety Upon Opening" must meet "A" criteria. These products will support the growth of bacteria when exposed to the environment.

Fully shelf stable products

Shelf Stable cured meat products NOT securely packaged must meet "B" criteria. These products will not support the growth of bacteria, package and/or handle to protect the product from cross contamination.

Packaging

Secure packaging means packaging equivalent to Reduced Oxygen Packaging (ROP) in strength and durability. Products packaged in film overwrap, poly bags with twist ties and other less secure packaging must meet the requirements of MDARD "B" criteria.

Temperature control for safety products

Non-shelf stable cured products have pH and Water Activity Aw values indicated in yellow. These products must be held under refrigeration for not more than 14 days unless the extended shelf-life criteria are met. Control of Listeria is required throughout the shelf life of these products. Temperature Control for Safety/ Potentially Hazardous Foods and must be labeled "Keep Refrigerated" or Refrigerate for Safety".

MDARD Tables A & B

		Aw														
		0.85	0.86	0.87	0.88	0.89	0.90	0.91	0.92	0.93	0.94	0.95	0.96	0.97	0.98	
pH	6.0	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.9	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.8	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.7	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.6	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.5	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.4	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A							
	5.3	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A				
	5.2	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A				
	5.1	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A				
	5.0	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A				
	4.9	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A				
	4.8	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A				
	4.7	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A				
	4.6	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
	4.5	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
4.4	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
4.3	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
4.2	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
4.1	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	