

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1522

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to establishing a state meat inspection program.

Brief Description: Establishing an intrastate meat inspection program.

Sponsors: Representatives Taylor, Shea, G. Hunt, Buys, Griffey, Scott, Van De Wege and Young.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/4/15, 2/17/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the State Meat Inspection Program for all livestock produced and meat processed within the state.
- Creates the Meat Inspection Account.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Dunshee, Kretz, Orcutt, Pettigrew, Schmick and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Stanford.

Staff: Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

Background:

All meat for public sale is inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in compliance with the federal Meat Inspection Act. The USDA delegated to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) authority to conduct meat inspections for certain facilities that only slaughter or prepare meat for consumption by the owner of the animal.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

There are three types of facilities that slaughter or prepare meat for consumption by the owner of the animal:

- custom meat facilities, which are facilities that process meat;
- custom farm slaughterers, which are mobile slaughter units either at the animal owner's farm or an approved site; and
- custom slaughter establishments, which are fixed slaughter facilities.

All three types of custom facilities listed above must be licensed by the WSDA. Custom facilities may not sell any meat that is processed in the facility. Instead, custom facilities slaughter or process animals for end use by the owner of the animal. The custom facility owner is paid by the owner of the animal to slaughter the animal and prepare the meat. The meat may not be sold either wholesale or retail.

Summary of Bill:

A non-transferable state meat inspection license is created that allows the holder to operate a facility in which meat is prepared for intrastate consumption. It is unlawful to operate such a facility without the license. Only meat originating from livestock produced in Washington and consumed in Washington is eligible to be processed under the license. Livestock eligible to be processed under the license must be either classified as a meat food animal or meat food bird. Those categories include cattle, swine, sheep, horse, goat, ostrich, emu, rhea, chicken, and other birds.

A state meat inspection license costs \$25. Payment must accompany an application developed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). The license and fee are annual and must be renewed by June 30 of each year to avoid an additional \$25 late renewal fee. Licenses may be denied, suspended, or revoked if a licensee violates the requirements for license holders, including the failure to maintain required records or allowing access for inspections.

The WSDA is authorized to adopt rules regarding the license. Rules may specify sanitation requirements, identification requirements for slaughtered animals, requirements for the handling, storage, and labeling of carcasses, and other slaughtering and processing requirements. The Director of the WSDA (Director) may inspect facilities for compliance with the rules and it is unlawful for a person to interfere with the Director in the performance of his or her duties. Violations of any requirements may be investigated by the Director. Investigations may be aided with subpoenas issued by the Director to compel witness attendance or the production of documents. All inspected meat and meat products prepared for public sale must be kept separate from meat processed for sale to a private individual.

Failure to comply with the terms of a license may result in a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per violation per day. Any penalties collected must be deposited into the newly created Meat Inspection Account (Account). The money in the Account may be used by the WSDA for implementing the State Meat Inspection Program.

Cities and counties are expressly authorized to adopt ordinances that are more restrictive than the statewide provisions for state meat inspection. However, any federal restrictions on intrastate meat inspections are declared to be invalid.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is similar to a bill that was introduced in 2011. Currently, if a meat producer wants to sell locker beef, the meat producer is required to sell half an interest in an animal because of the custom slaughter licensing requirements. This bill would allow meat processors to get their meat inspected and then be able to sell that meat to the public, like at a farmer's market.

(Other) Any intrastate meat inspection program has to be compliant with requirements set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). If the intrastate meat inspection program in the bill does not comply with the USDA's inspection requirements, then producers are left open to enforcement actions by the USDA.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Taylor, prime sponsor.

(Other) Steve Fuller, Department of Agriculture.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.