



## Meat and Meat Products

This is a guide to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) labelling and compositional standards for meat and meat products sold in, or imported into, Australia and New Zealand. Information on the composition and labelling requirements for all food can be found in the Queensland Health *Label Buster* guide, which can be found at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).

Chapter 1 of the Code contains the labelling provisions and information that must be provided for foods, and the requirements for how this information must be presented. Standard 2.2.1 imposes additional labelling and information requirements specific to meat and meat products. A reference number with square brackets e.g. [1.3.1] in this guide is a reference to the relevant Standard in the Code.

### Definitions

**Assisted service display cabinet** means an enclosed or semi-enclosed display cabinet which requires a person to serve the food as requested by the purchaser e.g. deli cabinet.

**Comminuted** means chopped, diced or minced.

**Cured and/or dried meat flesh in whole cuts or pieces** means meat flesh including any attached bone containing no less than 160g/kg meat protein on a fat free basis.

**Manufactured meat** means processed meat containing no less than 660g/kg of meat.

**Meat pie** means a pie containing no less than 250g/kg of meat flesh.

**Meat products** are not specifically defined in the Code, but in this guide they include manufactured and processed meat, as well as mixed food products that contain meat with other food or foods, such as hamburger patties or spaghetti and meatballs.

**Offal** means those parts of the carcass such as blood, brain, heart, kidney, liver, pancreas, spleen, thymus, tongue and tripe, but excludes meat flesh, bone and bone marrow.

**Prescribed names** for meat and meat products include:

- (a) fermented comminuted processed meat - either not heat treated, heat treated or cooked
- (b) fermented comminuted manufactured meat - either not heat treated, heat treated or cooked.

**Processed meat** means a meat product containing no less than 300g/kg (30%) meat, where meat either singly or in combination with other ingredients or additives, has undergone a method of processing other than boning, slicing, dicing, mincing or freezing, and includes manufactured meat and cured and/or dried meat flesh in whole cuts or pieces.

Products containing less than 30% meat, therefore not meeting the definition of 'processed meat', may include hamburger patties or meatloaf. These products are regarded as mixed foods and must comply with the general food standards for all food as well as any food product standards that apply to each of the components of the food.

**Sausage** means processed meat that is minced, is comminuted meat, or a combination thereof, which may be combined with other foods, encased or formed into discrete units, but does not include meat formed or joined into the semblance of cuts of meat.

## Labelling – food for retail sale

Generally, all foods sold by retail must be labelled in full. Information on the full labelling requirements is available in the *Label Buster* guide.

However, exemptions apply to food that is:

- unpackaged
- in an inner package not designed for individual sale (excluding individual portion packs with a wrapper that has a surface area of 30cm<sup>2</sup> or more, which must contain allergen declarations)
- made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold
- packaged in the presence of the purchaser (including sale from an assisted service display cabinet) delivered packaged and ready for consumption at the express order of the purchaser
- sold at a fundraising event e.g. a meat tray raffle.

All food for retail sale that fit into any of the exemption categories specified above must still provide certain information on or in connection with the display of the food, or provided upon request by the purchaser, as set out in the *Label Buster* guide. [1.2.1]

Examples of some of the information requirements relating specifically to meat and meat products are provided in table 1.

**Table 1.**

Requirement	Example
Allergens – a specifically worded advisory statement, warning statement or declaration is required. [1.2.3]	Presence of peanuts, cereals, unpasteurised egg products, added sulphites in concentrations of 10mg/kg or more.
A nutrition claim - nutrition information panel. [1.2.8]	Claims such as 'gluten free' or 'low fat'.
Irradiated food (see section 5.5.7 of <i>Label Buster</i> ) - the label must include a statement to the effect that the irradiated food has been treated with ionising radiation. [1.5.3]	Herbs that have been irradiated which are added as an ingredient to a meat product.
A claim that is made in regard to fat content – the percentage of characterising ingredient(s). [1.2.10]	Percentage of beef in beef sausages.
A claim that is made in relation to the fat content of minced meat – the maximum proportion of fat. [2.2.1]	Low fat beef mince.
Raw meat joined or formed into the semblance of a cut of meat – a declaration that the meat is formed or joined, and instructions on how the food can be safely cooked. [2.2.1]	Beef steakettes.
Unpackaged fermented comminuted manufactured meat and fermented comminuted meat products - very specific requirements as to the process that has been undertaken for the meat. [2.2.1]	Some salamis.
Food containing brain, heart, kidney, liver, tongue or tripe must be declared as 'offal' or by the specific name of the offal. [2.2.1]	Steak and kidney pie.
All other types of offal must declare the specific name of the offal.	

### Country of Origin labelling for unpackaged meat [1.2.11]

**Unpackaged pork, beef, lamb, hogget, mutton, chicken or a mix of these foods**, must be labelled with a statement on or in connection with the display of the food, which–

- (a) identifies the country or countries of origin of the food; or
- (b) indicates that the food is a mix of local and imported foods; or
- (c) indicates that the food is a mix of imported foods.

This includes a food that has been–

- (a) cut, filleted, sliced, minced or diced; or
- (b) pickled, cured, dried, smoked, frozen or preserved by other means; or
- (c) marinated; or
- (d) cooked.

A single sign may be used for products that have the same country of origin. For example, a butcher that only sells meat produced in Australia may display a single sign with a statement such as 'all meat displayed in store are the product of Australia'.

### Print sizes for food labels

Country of Origin declarations for the types of unpackaged meat specified above must be the size of type of at least 9mm, or 5mm where the food is in a refrigerated enclosed or semi-enclosed display cabinet which requires a person to serve the food as requested by the purchaser (e.g. deli cabinet containing meats served by a shop assistant upon request by a customer).

### Labelling - meat for wholesale

The wholesale of meat involves the sale or supply of meat and meat products, including smallgoods, sold or supplied to other food businesses for subsequent sale by retail.

All packaged meat and meat products for wholesale must provide the following information:

- (a) name of the food
- (b) lot identification
- (c) business name and physical address (may be provided in documentation accompanying the food).

However, the above information is not required to be provided where:

- (a) food is in an inner package or packages contained in an outer package where the label on the outer package includes the above information; or
- (b) food is in a transportation outer (e.g. clear plastic) and the above information is clearly visible through the transportation outer on the labels on the inner packages.

While this is the minimum amount of information that must be provided, the purchaser of the food may request further information from the supplier to enable them to comply with the labelling and compositional requirements of the Code for retail sale. The supplier is required under the Code [1.2.1] to provide the information in writing when requested either by the purchaser or the relevant authority, which in Queensland, is Queensland Health.

### Composition of meat and meat products

The Code includes provisions for what foods and additives may be present in different meat and meat products, and any associated labelling declarations in relation to these foods.

#### Permitted food additives [1.3.1]

**Food additives must not be added to food, unless expressly permitted in Standard 1.3.1 of the Code.**

The additives and maximum permitted level of additives in different meats and meat products are identified in Appendix 2. References to schedules refer to the relevant schedules for Standard 1.3.1 of the Code.

#### Carry-over of additives

If an ingredient contains an additive, the additive could be present in a final product. For example, if meat is intended for use in sausage manufacture contains 125mg/kg of sulphur dioxide, it is likely all or most of this will be present in the final product. Therefore, the manufacturer must consider this before adding additional preservatives, to ensure the maximum permitted level of sulphur dioxide (500mg/kg) is not exceeded (refer to Appendix 1).

When using an additive in food, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) must be used, which means using the lowest level possible of an additive to achieve its function (e.g. preservation) which will leave the least residue in the final food.

#### Inspection brands

Permitted colours may be applied to the outer surface of meat as a brand for the purposes of inspection or identification and do not have to be declared on the label of the package that contains that food.

### Maximum Residue Limits and maximum levels of contaminants and natural toxicants [1.4.1]

Maximum limits for chemicals and toxicants are safe legal limits of *natural and man-made contaminants* that are tolerated in specified foods.

Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are the highest legal limits for *agricultural and veterinary chemical residues* in particular foods (including meat and meat products) [1.4.2]. They are set to protect the health and safety of consumers. If there is no maximum level specified in the Code for an agricultural or veterinary chemical in a food, the chemical is not permitted to be present in the food.

### Legal microbiological limits [1.6.1]

Legal microbiological limits are set to ensure that all meat and meat products are safe to eat. Correct handling of the meat is essential to ensure microbiological safety. The Code sets the legal limits that apply.

### For further information

Queensland Health also has a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety which are available from [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).

If you have any further questions relating to the labelling or composition of meat and meat products, contact the Public Health Unit for the area where you are located. Contact details for Public Health Units can be found at [www.health.qld.gov.au/cho](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/cho).



## Appendix 1. Compositional standards for meat and meat products.

<b>Minced or diced meat</b>	
<b>Preservatives</b>	Nil. Minced and diced meat are considered to be raw meat, and cannot contain preservatives.
<b>Fat</b>	If calling your mince 'lean', 'low fat', 'trim' etc., the label must refer to the fat content of the meat. The maximum proportion of fat content must be expressed in g/100g.  Where the mince is not required to bear a label, the fat content must be displayed on or in connection with the food, or provided to the customer upon request.
Minced meat cannot be called 'diet' mince. To call a product 'diet', it cannot have greater than a specified number of kilojoules, and meat with all visible fat removed still surpasses the allowable kilojoule level for a diet product). A 'lean meat' product is generally accepted as containing not more than 10g/100g fat. A 'low fat' product cannot contain more than 3g/100g of fat.	
<b>Rissoles/ meat patties</b>	
<b>Preservatives</b>	Nil. Rissoles are considered a minced meat product. The minced meat component cannot contain any sulphur dioxide or other additives, except if they are called 'sausage meat' rissoles, in which case they must comply with the standard for sausage meat. However, other foods may be added to the minced meat, for example, parsley and other herbs.
<b>Sausages</b>	
<b>Preservatives</b>	May contain sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites up to a maximum of 500mg/kg.
<b>Fat</b>	There must be a minimum of 50% fat free meat flesh. 'Fat-free meat flesh' is measured by analysis of the meat protein. It does not mean meat flesh without visible fat.
<b>Species</b>	If you advertise your sausages as a certain species (e.g. pork sausages), that is the only meat species permitted in the sausage.
<b>Beef Jerky</b>	
<b>Preservatives</b>	May contain nitrites up to 125mg/kg and sorbates up to 1500mg/kg.
<b>Fat</b>	Must contain at least 160g/kg fat free meat flesh.
<b>Moisture content</b>	Dried meat must have water content of less than 85%. This does not include 'slow dried cured meat' such as pancetta or prosciutto.
<b>Poultry</b>	
<b>Moisture content</b>	Frozen poultry must yield no more than 60mg/kg of fluid as determined by the method described in the Schedule to Standard 2.2.1.

## Appendix 2. Permitted additives for meat and meat products.

Food type/ generic food category	Additive Name	Additive INS no.	Maximum Permitted Level	Qualifications
<b>Raw meat, poultry and game</b>	<b>No additives, unless expressly permitted below.</b>			
Poultry	Sodium acetates	262	5000mg/kg	-
<b>Processed meat, poultry and game products in whole cuts or pieces</b> (e.g. raw and cooked corned beef, shoulder ham)	All additives in Schedules 2, 3 & 4	-	-	Schedules 2 and 3
	Nisin	234	12.5mg/kg	Schedule 4 (colours)
	Ethyl lauroyl arginate	243	200mg/kg	-
Commercially sterile canned cured meat	Nitrites (potassium and sodium salts)	249-250	50mg/kg	Total of nitrates and nitrites, calculated as sodium nitrite.
Cured meat			125mg/kg	
Dried meat	Sorbic acid and sodium, potassium and calcium sorbates	200-203	1500mg/kg	Total of nitrates and nitrites, calculated as sodium nitrite.
	Nitrites (potassium and sodium salts)	125	125mg/kg	
Slow dried cured meat	Nitrites (potassium and sodium salts)	249-250	125mg/kg	Total of nitrates and nitrites, calculated as sodium nitrite.
	Nitrates (potassium and sodium salts)	251-252	500mg/kg	
<b>Processed comminuted meat, poultry and game products</b>	All additives in Schedules 2, 3 & 4	-	100mg/kg	Total of nitrates and nitrites, calculated as sodium nitrite.
	Annatto extracts	160b	500mg/kg	
	Sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites	220-225, 228	125mg/kg	
	Nisin	234	12.5mg/kg	
	Ethyl lauroyl arginate	243	315mg/kg	
	Nitrites (potassium and sodium salts)	249-250	125mg/kg	
<b>Fermented, uncooked processed comminuted meat products</b>	Nitrates (potassium and sodium salts)	251-252	500mg/kg	Total calculated as sodium nitrite.
	Sorbic acid and sodium, potassium and calcium sorbates	200-203	1500mg/kg	
	Pimaricin (natamycin)	235	1.2mg/dm <sup>2</sup>	
Sausage and sausage meat containing raw unprocessed meat	Only additives listed in Schedule 2	-	GMP	-
	Sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites	220-225, 228	500mg/kg	
	Ethyl lauroyl arginate	243	315mg/kg	
<b>Edible casings</b>	All additives in Schedules 2, 3 & 4	-	-	-
	Sorbic acid and sodium, potassium and calcium sorbates	200-203	100mg/kg	
	Sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites	220-225, 228	500mg/kg	