

## Guidance

# Meat products: sell them legally in England

Find out what information you need to show on products made of or containing meat that you sell to the public.

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From: **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs** ([/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs](https://government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs)) and **Food Standards Agency** ([/government/organisations/food-standards-agency](https://government/organisations/food-standards-agency))

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This guide tells you the information you must provide with products made of or containing meat to follow the:

- European Food Information to Consumers Regulation No 1169/2011 (FIC)
- Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR)
- Products Containing Meat etc. (England) Regulations 2014 (PMR)

## Types of meat products

‘Meat’ and similar specific terms like ‘beef’, ‘lamb’ and ‘chicken’ is mammal or bird skeletal muscle with natural tissue that’s fit for human consumption.

The maximum total fat and connective tissue content you’re allowed is explained in this table:

| Species  | Fat content | Collagen to meat protein ratio |
|--|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Mammals (other than rabbits and porcines) and mixtures of species with a majority of mammal meat | 25%         | 25%                            |
| Porcines   | 30%         | 25%                            |
| Birds and rabbits  | 15%         | 10%                            |

You must express the collagen to meat protein ratio as the percentage of collagen in meat protein. The collagen content means the hydroxyproline content multiplied by a factor of 8.

You must state on the ingredients list any parts of the carcass that don’t meet this criteria. For example, liver or blood serum.

If you exceed the maximum limits for fat or connective tissue but satisfy all other criteria for the definition of ‘meat’ you must:

- lower the ‘meat’ content accordingly
- state the presence of any fat and connective tissue in the list of ingredients in addition to the term ‘meat’

For example, ingredients for breaded chicken nuggets might include, chicken, water, chicken connective tissue, chicken fat, breadcrumbs, egg.

## **Fresh meat**

This is meat that hasn't had any preserving process other than chilling or freezing. It includes meat that is vacuum packed or packed in a controlled atmosphere.

## **Meat preparations**

These are foods made from fresh meat without changing the structure of the muscle fibre that characterises fresh meat. Other foods, seasonings and additives may have been added to them.

## **Products containing meat**

These are foods where meat is an ingredient, even if the other ingredient is 5% water.

A product containing meat also includes foods containing multiple ingredients, for example a chicken and mushroom pie or a roast chicken ready meal.

## **Types of meat you can't sell**

You can't sell products that contain certain ingredients if the product is 'uncooked', meaning it's sold on the basis that it needs further cooking before consumption.

You must not use any of these ingredients in uncooked products made and sold in England:

- feet
- intestine (except as sausage skin)
- lungs
- oesophagus
- rectum
- spinal cord
- spleen
- stomach
- udder

## **Products with added water**

You must tell the consumer if you add water to a meat product or preparation that makes up more than 5% of its weight.

You only need to do this if the meat product or preparation looks like a cut, joint, slice, portion or carcass.

This doesn't apply to products like sausages because they don't look like cuts or joints.

Include the information in the name of the food. For example 'ham with added water'.

## Formed foods

You must tell the consumer if a food product looks like a whole piece of meat but is made up of 2 or more separate pieces.

Put the words 'formed meat' next to the name of the product.

This applies to products that:

- look like a whole piece of meat, like a chicken breast
- products that appear to be taken from a whole single piece of meat, like sliced ham

## Added proteins

You must tell the consumer if you add protein to products containing meat or meat preparations from a different species to the main product.

Include the name and origin of the protein in the name of the food.

You need to do this wherever the protein is used as an ingredient. This includes hydrolysed proteins such as:

- albumin
- collagen
- casein
- milk protein
- egg protein.

For example, a product name could be 'chicken breast with added pork protein' or 'beef escalopes with chicken egg protein'.

You should include any other added ingredient from a different species in the list of ingredients. For example, the ingredients for a chicken pie might include, flour, water, chicken (10%), pork fat and suet.

## Minced meat

Minced meat should meet certain standards, based on a daily average:

|                             | <b>fat content must be less than</b> | <b>collagen to meat protein ratio must be less than</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Lean minced meat            | 7%                                   | 12%   |
| Minced pure beef            | 20%                                  | 15%   |
| Minced meat containing pork | 30%                                  | 18%   |
| Other minced meats          | 25%                                  | 15%   |

You can sell minced meat that doesn't meet these criteria if the label has the words 'For UK market only' followed by the national mark.

The national mark is a printed square (□) followed by the words "for UK market only".

The label must always show the maximum percentage of fat and the collagen to meat protein ratio. Use the words 'percentage of fat content under ...' and 'collagen/meat protein ratio under ...'

## Date of freezing

You must show the date of freezing or first freezing on:

- frozen meat
- frozen meat preparations

Use the words "frozen on" and give the date on which the food, in the form it's being sold, was first frozen.

You can give the oldest date of freezing where a product or preparation contains food from batches frozen on different dates. For example, a beef stir

fry containing red peppers.

You don't need to give the date of first freezing if the meat content of a food is included as an ingredient (such as frozen chicken pie).

## Reserved descriptions

Your products must have a minimum percentage of meat ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75692aed915d6faf2b2c5c/minimum\\_percentage\\_of\\_meat.doc](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75692aed915d6faf2b2c5c/minimum_percentage_of_meat.doc)) (MS Word Document, 51.5 KB) if they're made and sold in England and use one of the following reserved descriptions:

- hamburger
- chopped
- corned
- luncheon
- pie
- pudding
- game pie
- Scottish or Scotch pie
- pie or pudding
- pastie or pasty
- bridie
- sausage roll
- sausage, link, chipolata, sausage meat

## Penalties

You're breaking the law if you don't follow the rules for selling products containing meat. You may get an [improvement notice](https://www.gov.uk/food-labelling-giving-food-information-to-consumers#improvement-notices) (<https://www.gov.uk/food-labelling-giving-food-information-to-consumers#improvement-notices>) from your local council.

You'll have a [right to appeal](https://www.gov.uk/appeal-against-a-food-labelling-decision-or-improvement-notice) (<https://www.gov.uk/appeal-against-a-food-labelling-decision-or-improvement-notice>) any improvement notice.

## Meat labels

Read the Food Standards Agency's guidance on [food labelling and composition](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-composition) ([https://www.food.gov.uk/business-](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-composition)

[industry/guidancenotes/labelregsguidance](#) to find out what other parts of the carcase you can't sell under EU hygiene laws.

If you're a business and want advice on labelling, contact your local [trading standards office](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-trading-standards-office>).

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