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Memorandum Circular
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SUBJECT: Guidelines in the Implementation of DA Administrative Order No. 6, Series of 2012 (RULES AND REGULATIONS ON THE HYGIENIC HANDLING OF CHILLED, FROZEN AND THAWED MEAT IN MEAT MARKETS)

The following are the guidelines in the implementation of DA Administrative Order No. 6, Series of 2012 (Rules and Regulations on the Hygienic Handling of Chilled, Frozen and Thawed Meat in Meat Markets)

A. Scope

Administrative Order No. 6, Series of 2012 (AO 6) covers the hygienic handling of chilled, frozen and thawed meat in meat markets.

This Order applies only to raw meats and not to processed meat products which are subject to separate rules and regulations.

B. Responsibilities of Meat Traders, Vendors, Handlers and Market Administrators

a) Meat Traders and Vendors:

Meat Traders and vendors shall ensure that the meat they handle, distribute and sell is sold within the prescribed time from production date, and that traceability is maintained by keeping records of the transaction especially the source of the meat they handle, distribute and sell.

Meat traders and vendors must be licensed and shall comply with the requirements of the LGUs.

Meat traders and vendors shall ensure that the Meat Inspection Certificate issued by the controlling authorities (NMIS



or LGU Meat Inspection Officers) is displayed in meat stalls/markets, or accompany the products being transported.

b. Meat Handlers:

Meat handlers shall handle meat and meat products in a hygienic manner and shall comply with the requirements for personnel hygiene in the handling of meat in accordance with Section 9 of AO 6.

They shall have a Certificate of Attendance to a training course on Hygienic Handling of Meat in Meat Markets conducted by the NMIS or by the LGUs.

They shall be licensed or registered by the LGUs and shall possess an Annual Health Certificate.

c. Market Administrators

The market administrator shall ensure that all meat traders, vendors and handlers in their areas of jurisdiction are licensed or registered.

They shall see to it that market facilities for the hygienic and sanitary handling of meat are kept in good condition.

The Market Administrator shall assist the controlling Authority in the enforcement of AO 6 and these guidelines.

C. Meat Source and Certification

All meat offered for sale in any meat market shall have passed inspection and certified fit for human consumption by the controlling authority (NMIS or LGU Meat Inspection Officers).

The meat shall come from an accredited or locally registered meat cold storage or meat cutting plant. When frozen meat is already in retail packages, it shall come from accredited cold storage warehouses.

All chilled, frozen meat and thawed meat intended for retail sale shall be accompanied by a meat inspection certificate (Certificate of Meat Inspection or COMI) from the meat establishment.

All meat that is inadvertently exposed to adverse temperature conditions or sources of contamination that may affect the safety and suitability, shall be subjected to re-inspection by a competent person and issued with another

meat inspection certificate before further transport, distribution or sale is allowed.

D. MEAT PACKAGING AND LABELLING

Meat packaging of chilled, frozen and thawed meat for retail sale is optional.

When meat is pre-cut and/or pre-packaged and labelled, the following shall apply:

- a. Pre-cutting and pre-packaging shall be done at an accredited/registered meat establishment.
- b. The product must maintain the required product temperature during pre-cutting and packaging.
- c. The pre-cutting and packaging area must be kept under good hygienic condition and should comply with Section 8 of AO 6 and personnel should apply good hygienic practices and comply with Section 9 of the same AO.
- d. Primary packaging materials for pre-package meat shall be of food grade; oxygen permeable; free from any form of impurities or contaminants, without defects or pinholes; and properly handled and kept clean.

The pre-packaged chilled, frozen or thawed meat shall be labelled with the following information:

- a. Name and type of the product
- b. Net quantity
- c. Name and address of the meat cutting plant / repacker
- d. Repacking date
- e. Lot identification code
- f. Expiry Date (for frozen meat)

E. MEAT TRANSPORT TO MEAT MARKETS

Meat shall be transported in an accredited vehicle that shall always be kept clean and regularly disinfected. The vehicle should not have been used for transporting live animals or any other cargo which may adversely affect the safety and quality of the meat to be transported.

Transport vehicles, and crates used should be cleaned and if necessary sanitized as soon as practicable after meat has been unloaded.

Meat transport vehicle should be used for transporting meat from the cold storage warehouse and cutting plant to the market. Meat transport vehicles should be washed and disinfected prior to loading.

To prevent the deleterious effects of airborne contaminants, the transport vehicle should be closed, and/or have provisions for covering/protecting the meat.

Chilled, frozen and thawed meat shall be transported in refrigerated vehicles and/or insulated containers that are able to maintain the required product temperature.

The product compartment of transport vehicle should not carry tires, personal effects and other materials that may contaminate the meat.

F. HANDLING OF CHILLED, FROZEN AND THAWED MEAT IN MEAT MARKETS

1. General Considerations:

The following rules and regulations shall be observed in the handling of chilled, frozen and thawed meat.

- 1.1 Chilled meat shall not be frozen and shall be maintained at product temperature higher than 0°C, frozen meat at a maximum of 0°C and thawed meat, a maximum of 5°C.
- 1.2 All persons and entities engaged in the handling and sale of meat in meat markets shall be accredited by NMIS or licensed/registered by LGUs.
- 1.3 There shall be no mixing or intermingling of different types of meat. Each type of meat (chilled, frozen, thawed) shall be handled accordingly.
- 1.4 Facilities used to handle the product should be of a size and design that ensures the maintenance of product temperature, facilitates the proper handling of the meat and allows regular cleaning of the facility.
- 1.5 Meat shall be hygienically handled throughout distribution and sale and every effort taken to prevent contamination at all times. During sale, customers and vendors shall use tongs or similar devices to handle the meat. Due care should be taken to prevent meat from falling to the floor.
- 1.6 Areas where the meat is handled and sold shall be maintained in sanitary conditions, kept orderly and in good repair at all times.
- 1.7 The sales and display areas shall be kept free of clutter. Piling of boxes or goods intended for later sale shall not be allowed except when receiving deliveries or when storage containers are being cleaned.
- 1.8 Meat remaining unsold after sometime which has lost its original quality such as on the basis of color and texture but shows no sign of spoilage and was not exposed to _____ shall

be withdrawn from the sale area and can be further utilized for other purposes.

1.9 Meat showing signs of spoilage shall be immediately removed from the sales area, properly disposed and not further utilized for human consumption.

1.10 Controlling Authority shall ensure that all types of meat showing signs of spoilage shall be immediately removed from the sales area, properly disposed and not further utilized for human consumption.

1.11 Requirements of RA No 7394 otherwise known as the Consumer Act of the Philippines (ie Title III Protection Against Deceptive, Unfair and Unconscionable Sales Acts or Practices) should be followed such as:

1.11.1 prohibition on the use of color enhancing lights, mats and other materials as a means to deceive the consumers as to the freshness/wholesomeness of the goods; and

1.11.2 prohibition on the use of dyes/colorant and other unapproved substances.

2. Chilled Meat

The following shall be observed in the handling of chilled meat at meat markets:

2.1 Chilled meat should be kept at a minimum product temperature higher than 0°C or that prevents freezing and a maximum product temperature of 10°C during its handling, distribution and sale.

2.2 The product shall be displayed in supermarkets or other meat markets whole or cut and/or pre-packaged in refrigerated display chillers and/or insulated chest coolers with ice or frozen gel packs, and other similar devices for chilling product. Chilled cut poultry can be displayed either packed or unpacked over a bed of ice.

2.3 Chilled meat can also be cut or sliced from its original form in supermarkets and meat markets, provided tools and cutting facilities under temperature controlled conditions are available to carry out this activity in a sanitary manner. In the absence of proper cutting facilities under temperature controlled conditions, meat handlers may cut the meat for retail buyers outside its storage container and quickly return the unsold portion into the same container. Keeping any unsold portion exposed to ambient temperature while not under the process of cutting for immediate sale shall not be allowed.

2.4 The cutting and slicing and pre-packaging and labelling of chilled meat shall take place in an accredited or registered meat

establishment. The cutting and slicing of chilled meat in supermarkets and other meat markets shall also be carried out in areas accredited or registered for this purpose.

2.5 When ice is used to maintain product temperature, it shall be potable. Care should be exercised to protect chilled meat from direct contact with thawing ice water.

2.6. Chilled meat unsold at the end of its selling time because of a slight loss in its fresh-like character but showing no signs of spoilage, shall be used for purposes traditionally applied for the further utilization of this type of meat and handled in the same manner.

2.7 When chilled meat is displayed at ambient temperature and sold as fresh meat, it shall not be displayed at ambient temperature longer than 8 hours from the time it is taken out from the refrigerated display chillers and/or insulated chest coolers with ice or frozen gel packs, and other similar devices for chilling product. Any unsold meat at the end of its selling time because of a slight loss in its fresh-like character but showing no signs of spoilage, shall be used for purposes traditionally applied for further utilization of this type of meat and handled in the same manner.

3. Frozen Meat

The following rules and regulations shall be observed in the handling of frozen meat to be sold as frozen and not thawed at meat markets.

3.1 Frozen meat shall be kept at a product temperature no higher than 0°C during its handling, storage, distribution and sale.

3.2 Frozen meat shall be sold from display freezers and/or chest freezers that maintain product temperature of 0°C or lower.

3.3 When frozen meat is cut into smaller blocks for retail sale, the cutting shall take place under temperature controlled conditions in an accredited/registered meat establishment or in a central cutting facility in the market which is temperature controlled. In the absence of proper cutting facilities under temperature controlled conditions, meat handlers may cut the meat for retail buyers outside its storage container and quickly return the unsold portion into the same container. Keeping any unsold portion exposed to ambient temperature while not under the process of cutting for immediate sale shall not be allowed.

3.4 Frozen meat can continue to be sold provided its original quality and product temperature of 0°C or lower are maintained. Frozen meat that is kept at temperatures higher than 0°C and has started to thaw shall be treated as thawed meat and will be subject to requirements under thawed meat.

4. Thawed Meat

The following rules and regulations shall be observed in the handling of thawed meat. Thawed meat is from frozen meat and is exposed to temperatures higher than 0°C to soften it for ease of handling.

4.1 In general, thawing, cutting and pre-packaging shall take place in an NMIS accredited/LGU registered meat establishment under temperature controlled environment.

4.2 Cutting of thawed meat for retail sale may also be done in supermarket and other markets in a temperature controlled cutting facility. In the absence of proper cutting facilities under temperature controlled conditions, meat handlers may cut the meat for retail buyers outside its storage container and quickly return the unsold portion into the same container. Keeping any unsold portion exposed to ambient temperature while not under the process of cutting for immediate sale shall not be allowed.

4.3 Thawing of frozen meat shall take place under a temperature controlled environment that maintains product temperature at 5°C.

4.4 Thawing medium such as air and water may be used provided frozen meat is completely sealed in a packaging material and or its original bulk packaging.

4.5 Product temperature shall be maintained at 5°C during the cutting and packaging to prevent the formation of drip.

4.6 The thawed meat shall be kept in freezers, chillers or insulated containers (with ice gel packs or similar sealed cooling devices) in meat markets to ensure that product temperature is maintained no higher than 5°C. Use of non-sealed ice directly poses potential risk due to contamination of meat from contact with thawing ice water and is therefore prohibited.

4.7 Thawed meat shall not be refrozen.

4.8 Thawed meat unsold at the end of its selling time because of a slight loss in its original quality characteristics shall be removed from

the sales area. If showing no signs of spoilage it can be used for other purposes.

G. HYGIENE, SANITATION AND VERMIN CONTROL REQUIREMENTS FOR MEAT MARKETS

1. Stray animals must not be allowed in any meat market.
2. Infestations of insects or rodents must be reported immediately to the Market Administrators/Master.
3. The meat stall, its surroundings and equipment or tools should be kept clean, free of litter and odors, in good repair and condition and free from vermin at all times.
4. The meat stalls shall be free from personal belongings, such as clothes, footwear, blankets, tobacco and other forms of contaminants.
5. Meat markets should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
6. Vermin Abatement Program shall be regularly implemented.
7. Meat stall including floor and surrounding areas should be properly cleaned and disinfected before and after use.
8. The sales area or counter should be built of solid, resistant and impermeable material and should be sufficiently high to be easily sanitized.
9. Cutting and chopping blocks for meat shall be made of even, impervious, non-fibrous, and easily cleaned materials and free of cracks and crevices.
10. Knives, tables and meat hooks should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
11. Disposal/Trash containers should be emptied at the end of sale period and cleaned properly.
12. Proper drainage system should be installed and maintained.
13. Potable water should be made readily available.

H. REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONNEL HYGIENE

1. Persons known or suspected to be suffering from, or to be carriers of illness/es likely to be transmitted through meat and/or person to person, shall not be allowed to handle (eg. sell, cut) meat;
2. Meat handlers must take all necessary steps to prevent the contamination of meat by maintaining a high degree of personal cleanliness that include, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Taking a bath before going to work;
 - b. Wearing clean apron and hairnet during work;
 - c. Keeping nails trimmed, clean and without nail polish;
 - d. Not wearing of jewelries, accessories and perfumes;
 - e. Using suitable protective clothing which shall be changed everyday or as often as necessary.
3. Meat Handlers shall be aware and adopt the proper hand washing practices:

- a. Steps in hand washing:
 - i. Wet hands with potable water
 - ii. Soap, lather, and scrub all parts of the hands, fingers and wrists
 - iii. Rinse and dry with clean cloth or towel
 - b. Wash hands frequently to prevent contamination of the meat, including but not limited to the following:
 - i. before, during and after work;
 - ii. immediately after using the toilet;
 - iii. after coughing and sneezing;
 - iv. after contact with dirty objects and materials;
 - v. before and after eating.
4. To prevent contamination of meat, the following but not limited to, shall be strictly prohibited, while at work:
- a. smoking;
 - b. drinking;
 - c. spitting;
 - d. chewing or eating;
 - e. sneezing or coughing over meat and meat products;
 - f. urinating in the meat stall;
 - g. handling of unpacked meat, money, and receipts at the same time; and
 - h. grooming (eg. combing, nail trimming).

I. IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

1. The Local Government Units (LGU) being the principal implementing authority on the regulation of meat and meat products within their territorial jurisdiction as mandated under RA 7160 and *EO 137*, shall implement and monitor the compliance with this Order.
2. The National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) shall assist the LGUs in the implementation of this regulation.
3. The National Consumer Affairs Council (NCAC) shall support the LGUs and NMIS in the advocacy program relative to the implementation of this Order.

J. PENALTIES

All persons or corporations found guilty of directly or indirectly violating any provisions of AO 6 shall be subject to sanctions prescribed in Republic Act 9296, otherwise known as the "Meat Inspection Code of the Philippines" without prejudice to prosecution for violation of the Consumer Act of the Philippines and other applicable laws.

All meat which are handled in violation of the provisions of AO 6 shall be confiscated and disposed of accordingly.

K. CONFISCATION AND DISPOSAL OF CONFISCATED PRODUCTS.

Personnel of NMIS and LGUs employed for purposes of meat inspection shall have the authority to confiscate any carcass, parts of carcasses, meat found to have been prepared, handled, packed, stored, transported or offered for sale in violations of AO 6.

All confiscations undertaken by an officer/inspector shall be properly documented. A confiscation receipt shall be issued to the owner attesting to the cause of the confiscation.

All confiscated items shall be condemned and disposed of by rendering or other similar methods prescribed by the NMIS.

The owner of the confiscated items shall be given an opportunity to witness the condemnation/disposal of the items. If after a reasonable period of time, the owner failed to appear at the designated place of condemnation/disposal, the NMIS or LGU personnel may proceed with the condemnation/disposal even without the presence of the owner of the items provided it is properly witnessed.

L. REPORTING

A monthly report of activities relative to the implementation of AO 6 series of 2012, including details of market monitoring and meat confiscations, shall be submitted to the Executive Director of the NMIS by the head of the Meat Inspection Service of the LGU and the NMIS Regional Technical Director.

The Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PMED) of NMIS shall collate reports from the field and prepare a monthly consolidated report for submission to the Secretary.

APPROVED:


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