**Section 760.3300 Curing of Meat and Poultry**

a) No retail food store shall cure meat and/or poultry on the premises of the retail food store without written approval from the Department or its designee.

b) Any retail food store desiring to conduct curing operations on the premises shall submit a written application to the appropriate local health department for review. The application shall include all information required in this Section and shall be product specific. The local health department will perform a preliminary review of the application. The local health department shall forward the application and its recommendation regarding the application, along with any comments, to the Department for final approval. The Department may, upon request of a local health department, enter into an agreement with the local health department to allow the local health department to grant final approval for meat and poultry curing operations within its jurisdiction. Prior to commencing curing operations, the local health department shall perform an on-site inspection of the retail food store to ensure that the curing operations conform to the approved HACCP plan. Where no local health department exists, the Department will accept and review HACCP plans and will conduct on-site inspections of the facility.

c) A list of acceptable products approved for curing within the retail food store must be available in the processing area of the establishment.

d) Employees assigned to cure meat or poultry must complete a training course developed by the food service establishment and demonstrate familiarity with this Section and the potential hazards associated with the curing of foods. A description of the training course content provided to the employees must be included in the application and available for review by the local health department.

e) An approved HACCP plan is required for all curing operations. The following criteria must be met for the curing of meat and poultry in the establishment. All critical control points must be addressed including purchase of prepared cure mixes; use of calibrated and certified weighing devices if cure mixes are blended on the premises instead of pre-mixed blends; storage of cure ingredients in a dry, protected location; and discarding of any packet if it becomes wet.

f) Raw material handling must be considered when thawing to prevent temperature abuse. Improperly thawed meat can cause insufficient cure penetration. Temperature abuse can cause spoilage or growth of pathogens. Curing may not be used to salvage meat that has excessive bacterial growth or spoilage.

g) Formulation, Preparation and Curing:

1) A formulation and preparation procedure must be documented;

2) All equipment and utensils must be cleaned and sanitized;

3) Pieces of meat or poultry must be prepared to uniform size to assure uniform cure penetration (this is extremely critical for dry and immersion curing);

4) Calibrated and certified scales with decals affixed indicating that the scales have been calibrated and certified by the Department of Agriculture, or one of their registered service companies, must be used to weigh ingredients;

5) A schedule or recipe must be established for determining the exact amount of curing formulation to be used, using only pre-measured and weighed packets, for a specified weight of meat or meat mixture;

6) Methods and procedures must be strictly controlled to ensure uniform cure;

7) Mixing of curing formulation with comminuted ingredients must be controlled and monitored (See 9 CFR 318 and 381);

8) All surfaces of meat or poultry must be rotated and rubbed at intervals of sufficient frequency to assure cure penetration when a dry curing method is used;

9) Immersion curing requires periodic mixing of the batch to facilitate uniform curing;

10) The application of salt during dry curing of muscle cuts requires that the temperature of the product be strictly controlled between 35 F and 41 F. The lower temperature is set for the purpose of assuring cure penetration and the upper temperature is set to limit microbial growth (See 9 CFR 318.10(c)(3)(iv));

11) Curing solutions must be discarded daily unless they remain with the same batch of product during its entire curing process;

12) Injection needles must be inspected for plugging when stitch pumping or artery pumping of muscle cuts is performed;

13) Sanitary casings must be provided for sausage, chub or loaf forming; and

14) Casings may not be stripped for reuse in forming additional chubs or sausages from batch to batch.

h) Cooking and smoking shall be done according to Section 750.180, Cooking Potentially Hazardous Foods, or Section 750.3200, Smoked Meat, Poultry or Other Food Products (See also 9 CFR 318.17 and 318.23).

i) Cooling:

1) Cooling shall be done according to Section 760.150(c)(1)(A) and (B), with written cooling procedures established;

2) Chill water used in water sprays or immersion chilling which is in direct contact with products in casings or products cooked in an impervious package must be properly chlorinated;

3) Chill water temperature must be monitored and controlled;

4) Chill water may not be reused until properly chlorinated. Reclaimed chill water must be discarded daily;

5) Product must be placed in a manner that allows chilled water or air to uniformly contact the product for assurance of uniform cooling;

6) Internal temperatures must be monitored during cooling by using calibrated temperature measuring devices;

7) Adequate cooling medium circulation must be maintained and monitored;

8) Temperatures of the cooling medium must be monitored and recorded in accordance with a written procedure;

9) Direct hand contact with product during cooling, peeling of casing and packaging is prohibited.

j) Fermentation and Drying:

1) Fermentation and drying must be done in conjunction with a cooking or smoking step in accordance with subsection (g) of this Section and 9 CFR 318.10(c)(3);

2) Temperature and time must be controlled during fermentation or drying and record logs that record the monitoring of this process must be maintained;

3) Humidity must be controlled during fermentation or drying by use of a humidistat. Monitoring of the process must be recorded in a written log;

4) The product must be kept separated during fermentation and drying to allow adequate air circulation during the process;

5) The use of an active and pure culture must be assured to effect a rapid pH drop of the product. Use of commercially produced culture is necessary and the culture must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions;

6) Determination of the pH of fermented sausages at the end of the fermentation cycle must be recorded;

7) Dry (unfermented) products may not be hot smoked until the curing and drying procedures are completed; and

8) Semi-dry fermented sausage must be heated after fermentation to a time/temperature sufficient to meet requirements in Section 750.180 (Cooking Potentially Hazardous Foods).

k) All aspects of curing operations must be conducted in an area specifically designated for this purpose. There must be an effective separation to prevent cross contamination between raw and cooked foods or cured and uncured foods. Access to processing equipment shall be restricted to responsible trained personnel who are familiar with the potential hazards inherent in curing foods.

l) Any records required in this Section must be retained by the retail food store for at least 6 months.

(Source: Added at 20 Ill. Reg. 3307, effective February 5, 1996)