



# Getting Started in Small Flock Poultry in Nova Scotia



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# Introduction

Because chicken meat, eggs and turkey meat are supply-managed commodities in Canada, there are regulations that restrict who can keep chickens and turkeys and where their products are able to be sold. Nova Scotia's provincial regulations make specific provisions for free-range poultry meat producers.

This booklet is intended for new, small-flock poultry producers in Nova Scotia. It is meant solely to provide answers to the questions:

- How many birds can I keep?
- Where can I sell the eggs or meat from my birds?

For the purposes of this booklet, small-scale poultry or domesticated fowl species include chicken, turkey, duck, goose, quail, and squab (domesticated pigeons raised for meat).

Note that larger scale producers of pullets, chicken eggs, chicken meat and turkey meat require quota and a license from the relevant commodity board. The regulations that apply to large-scale producers will not be covered in this booklet. For more information, contact the appropriate commodity association (contact information is included at the end of this booklet).

## ***Disclaimer***

Regulations may change at any time. While all care has been taken to make the information in this booklet as accurate as possible, the final word always rests with the appropriate regulatory body.

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Emu, ostrich and rhea are considered game bird species and require a Game Farm License issued by the Department of Agriculture. For more information, visit: <http://novascotia.ca/sns/paal/agric/paal008.asp>

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## Overview

Small-scale poultry production may encompass many different activities that could involve a variety of regulatory bodies. In this publication, poultry raising activities are classified based on how they are regulated, rather than by bird species, as follows:

- Operating a hatchery
- Selling chicks or turkey poults
- Selling young of any other domesticated fowl (e.g. ducklings, goslings)
- Raising chickens for their eggs
- Raising chickens for their meat
- Raising turkeys for their meat
- Raising any other domesticated fowl for either their eggs or their meat
- Selling eggs and meat

An overview of the rules for each of these activities are described in the sections that follow. For more regulation details, check in with the relevant commodity board. The contact information for each regulating body is included in the final section of this booklet.

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## Operating a Hatchery

A hatchery is defined as any facility in which eggs are artificially incubated and hatched. The Hatchery Regulations are administered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and apply to all egg hatching facilities with an incubation capacity of 1,000 eggs or greater, regardless of the species of domesticated fowl you are hatching. If your hatchery has a capacity of 1,000 eggs or greater, it must be registered with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. You require a Permit to Operate a Hatchery, which costs \$327.04+HST per year and is renewed annually. Your hatchery will be subject to inspection by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. A hatchery might produce hatched birds to be raised for egg production, meat production, show, embryonated eggs (i.e. eggs with a partially developed bird inside them) for food (balut), vaccine production, or research and related functions. Note that the important factor is incubation capacity, not actual production or intended end use. For more information on operating a hatchery contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

If your facility has an incubator-setting capacity of less than 1000 eggs (the number of eggs you can incubate at any one time), you are not considered a hatchery by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. You are still permitted to operate your facility.

If you are hatching chicks of a breed intended for meat production, you must report your sales to Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia or Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia as required under regulation.

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## Selling Chicks or Turkey Poults

There are regulations governing three types of young birds: pullets (female chickens raised for the purpose of egg production, usually sold either as day-old chicks or at around 18 weeks of age); meat-breed chicks; and turkey poults.

Quota is required to produce pullets, even if you do not plan to sell them. However, you can produce and sell up to 200 pullets per year without quota.

To sell meat-breed chicks, you must obtain a vendor license from Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia and collect a \$0.10 levy per meat-breed chick from each buyer who does not have a specialty chicken license or quota. There is no fee for the vendor license. You must report your sales, including the names and addresses of buyers, to Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia.

To sell turkey poults, you must obtain a vendor permit from Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia and remit a \$1.00 levy per poult to Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia. There is no fee for the vendor license. You must report your sales, including the names, addresses and phone numbers of all buyers, to Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia.

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## Selling Young of Any Other Domesticated Fowl

You may sell ducklings, goslings, or the young of any other domesticated fowl without quota, license or permit.

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## Raising Chickens for Their Eggs

You may have on your farm at any one time, no more than 200 laying hens unless you have quota.

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## Raising Chickens for Their Meat

You may keep up to 200 meat chickens for personal consumption per premise per year without a license or quota.

If you are planning to raise chickens to sell for meat, you need a specialty chicken license issued by Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia. Existing producer applications are given first priority until February 15th when new applications are considered. The final deadline to apply for a specialty chicken license is June 1st. First-time producers can apply for a license for up to 1,000 birds. In subsequent years, a license may be increased by up to 1,000 birds per year to a maximum of 11,000 birds. There is a \$25 annual license fee and a levy of \$0.09 per bird, plus a fee of \$0.025 per bird for the free-range sticker.



The amount of specialty chicken licenses available varies from year to year and is adjusted annually to correspond to the expected market demand so there is room for new producers in the market.

There are two types of specialty chicken licenses: free-range and organic. Free-range chicken farms are inspected to ensure that the chickens have access to fresh air, sun, soil, and green forage. Specialty licenses are issued annually and the specialty license period during which specialty chickens can be marketed fresh is April 1 – Nov 30th. The chickens must also receive a feed ration that consists solely of grains, vegetable oils, and necessary vitamins and minerals, and contains no traces of rendered meat products, fish meal, antibiotics or other medication of any kind, including growth promoters. The finished birds must be processed by a provincially or federally inspected abattoir in good standing with Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia.

Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia will inspect your farm to ensure it meets the requirements of the free-range license. Each licensee must report to Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia the following:

1. Number of birds placed
2. The date the birds are slaughtered
3. The number of birds slaughtered and their live weight on the “Speciality Production Report Form” supplied by Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia
4. Name of hatchery supplying chicks
5. Name of processing facility

The guidelines for raising organic chickens are more stringent than those for free range. From birth the chicks must be raised by certified organic production methods. The birds must have access to the outdoors or be fed sprouted grains for the period when confined indoors. The ration must be certified organic and is not allowed to contain antibiotics or meat by-products. Each bird is required to have at minimum 2 square feet of floor space. You are allowed to buy conventional chicks but they must be raised organically from birth to be considered organic. (Note: Exact guidelines will vary with the organic certification body used.)

For more information about specialty chicken licenses, or to receive an application form, contact Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia.

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## Raising Turkeys for Their Meat

You may keep up to 25 turkeys per year for personal consumption without a license or quota.

If you are planning to raise turkeys to sell for meat, you need a free-range turkey license issued by Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia. Application forms are due by April 15. There is a \$150 non-refundable administration fee. If a license is granted, it expires on November 30. First-time producers can apply for a license for up to 500 kg live weight. If eligible in years two through five the applicant may request a 75% increase until the 5,000 live kg is reached. (The number depends on the weight to which you plan to raise them.) You must pay Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia a levy of \$0.99 per broiler, \$0.99 per hen, and \$1.40 per tom and \$1.40 for mixed turkeys.

(Note: A broiler is defined as any one of a flock of any variety of turkey ordinarily marketed by a producer at a live flock weight averaging less than or equal to 5 kilograms per bird. A hen is defined as any one of a flock of any variety of turkey ordinarily marketed by a producer at a live flock weight averaging greater than 5 and less than 7 kilograms per bird. A tom is defined as any one of a flock of any variety of turkey ordinarily marketed by a producer at a live flock weight averaging greater than 7 and less than 11 kilograms per bird.)

The number of kilograms of free-range turkey available for license varies from year to year. In the past several years, all kilograms available for license have been allocated. If applications exceed the amount available, licenses are allocated on a “first come, first served” basis.

Free-range turkey farms must ensure that the turkeys have regular access to fresh air, sun, soil, and green forage. The turkeys must also receive a feed ration that consists solely of grains, vegetable oils, and necessary vitamins and minerals, and contains no traces of rendered meat products, fish meal, antibiotics or other medication of any kind, including growth promoters. The finished birds must be processed by a provincially or federally inspected abattoir registered with Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia.

Poults must be purchased from a registered hatchery and verification from the hatchery must be submitted to Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia identifying that the poults are free of any vaccines, antibiotics, probiotics or other medication of any kind.

Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia will inspect your farm to ensure it meets the requirements of the free-range license. Each licensee must report to Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia the following:

1. Number of birds placed
2. The date the birds are slaughtered
3. The number of birds slaughtered and their live weight on the “Free Range Report Form” supplied by Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia.
4. Name of hatchery supplying poults
5. Name of processing facility

For more information about free-range turkey licenses, or to receive an application form, contact Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia.

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## Raising any Other Domesticated Fowl for Meat or Eggs

You may keep any number of domesticated ducks, geese, or any other domesticated fowl for meat or eggs without quota, license, or permit.

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## Selling Eggs

All chicken eggs sold in Nova Scotia, with exception to farm gate or public market circumstances, must have been graded at an egg grading station registered with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. A list of registered grading stations can be found here: <https://inspection.canada.ca/exporting-food-plants-or-animals/food-exports/registers-and-lists/shell-egg-stations/eng/1391029540171/1391029591047>

In a grading station, eggs are received, washed, candled, weighed and packed into containers with the applicable federal grade name in an inspected, sanitary environment. There are four egg grades: Canada A, Canada B, Canada C, or Canada Nest Run. Canada A eggs are also sorted by size: Jumbo, Extra Large, Large, Medium, Small and Peewee.

All producers of chicken eggs are required to report their sales to Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia and to remit a levy on a per dozen basis. Please refer to the Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia Levy Order for the current levy rate per dozen.

Ungraded chicken eggs are permitted to be sold at the farm gate or at a public market (i.e. a farmers' market that is held no more than two days a week), which is considered by Nova Scotia Environment to be an extension of the farm gate. Eggs sold at public markets must be sold to the final consumer, be clean and be stored at 4°C. Because eggs are a Schedule A product, a Public Market Vendor Permit is required to sell eggs. A Public Market Vendor Permit is available from Nova Scotia Environment and costs \$38.70 + HST per year (some conditions apply). Public market inspections will be conducted by a Nova Scotia Environment Public Health Officer (PHO) at a frequency determined by the PHO.

Grading is not legally required for eggs of domesticated fowl species, but grading may be required by a third-party retailer.

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## Selling Meat

To be able to sell your meat at public markets, to restaurants, and any other food retailer, your birds must be slaughtered, processed, and packaged at a provincially inspected abattoir or processing plant.

You may sell freezer meat from your farm directly to consumers without a permit, however this must be a final sale and cannot be re-sold. If you are selling meat from a retail outlet on your farm (e.g. you have a retail sign or a meat display case, rather than just freezers in your house or shed), you require a Food Establishment Permit from Nova Scotia Environment. The cost of the permit is \$44.51 per year for seasonal Food Establishment Permit (4 months or less) or \$89.01 per year for year-round Food Establishment Permit. Find the most up to date permit prices here: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/docs/AppFoodEst.pdf>

Because meat is a Schedule A product, a Public Market Vendor Permit from Nova Scotia Environment is required to sell meat at a public market (i.e. a farmers' market or flea market that is held no more than two days a week). Find the most up to date permit prices here: <https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/docs/publicmarketapp.pdf> A Public Market Vendor Permit costs \$44.51 per year (some conditions apply). Public market and food establishment inspections will be conducted by Nova Scotia Environment when needed.



## SUMMARY TABLE: PRODUCTION

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Allowable Production</b>
Chicken eggs	Up to 200 laying hens per premise
Meat chickens	Specialty license required, allowing up to 11,000 birds/year (in first year only 1,000 birds allowed) Administration fee: \$25/year + \$0.09/bird (plus a \$0.025 per label fee, if needed)
Turkeys	Free-range license required, allowing up to 5,000 kg live weight/year/farm (in first year only 500 kg allowed) License fee: \$150 + \$0.99/broiler, \$0.99/hen, \$1.40/tom, \$1.40/mixed turkey

## SUMMARY TABLE: SALES

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Allowable Sales</b>
Pullets	Up to 200 per premise per year (this includes for own use)
Meat-chicken chicks	Vendor license required. License fee: \$0/year but must collect levy of \$0.10/bird from all unlicensed buyers and report sales
Turkey poults	Vendor permit required. Permit fee: \$0/year but must collect and remit a levy of \$1.00/bird from all buyers and report sales
Chicken eggs	Farm sales only, subject to applicable levy; if selling at public market, Public Market Vendor Permit required; fee: \$38.70 + HST per year; provincial grading regulations apply for off-farm sales
Chicken meat	Sale permitted anywhere in Nova Scotia if birds are from a licensed producer and processed at a licensed provincially-inspected abattoir, levy: 0.09¢/bird; if selling from own premises, Food Establishment Permit may be required; fee: varies; if selling at public market, Public Market Vendor Permit required; fee: \$38.70 + HST per year
Turkey meat	Sale permitted anywhere in Nova Scotia if birds are from a licensed producer and processed at a licensed provincially-inspected abattoir, levy: \$0.99/broiler; \$0.99/hen; \$1.40/tom or mixed turkey if selling from own premises, Food Establishment Permit may be required; fee: varies; if selling at public market, Public Market Food Permit required; fee: \$38.70 + HST per year

## Contact Information

### **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**

Nova Scotia Regional Office  
44–1000 Windmill Road, Dartmouth, NS B3B 1L7  
Tel: 902-536-1010  
Fax: 902-536-1098  
[www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

### **Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia**

531 Main St., Kentville, NS, B4N 1L4  
Email: [chicken@nschicken.com](mailto:chicken@nschicken.com)  
Tel: 902-681-7400  
Fax: 902-681-7401  
[www.nschicken.com](http://www.nschicken.com)

### **Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia**

303-1 Commercial Street, Truro, NS B2N 3H8  
Email: [info@nsegg.ca](mailto:info@nsegg.ca)  
Tel: 902-895-6341  
Fax: 902-895-6343  
[www.nseggs.ca](http://www.nseggs.ca)

### **Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia**

P.O. Box 407, Canning, NS, B0P 1H0  
Email: [info@turkeyfarmersofnovascotia.com](mailto:info@turkeyfarmersofnovascotia.com)  
Tel: 902-582-7877  
Fax: 902-582-5326  
[www.turkeyfarmersofnovascotia.com](http://www.turkeyfarmersofnovascotia.com)

### **Nova Scotia Environment**

Public Health Officers are located throughout the province.  
For a complete list, visit the staff directory at:  
[www.novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection](http://www.novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection)

### **Perennia Extension and Food Safety Services**

199 Dr. Bernie MacDonald Drive, Bible Hill, NS Canada B6L 2H5  
Phone: 902-896-0277  
Fax: 902-896-7299

32 Main Street, Kentville, NS Canada B4N 1J5  
Phone: 902-678-7722  
Fax: 902-678-7266  
[www.perennia.ca](http://www.perennia.ca)



