



Section 1, Setting Up

In this section you will learn

- ▶ What should you bear in mind in the set-up stage?
- ▶ How can you ensure that the premises are suitable for your operations?
- ▶ What kind of competence is required from you and your staff?
- ▶ What else is required of you?
- ▶ How can you apply for approval for your facility's operations?
- ▶ What does the approval inspection involve?
- ▶ What other important matters should you bear in mind?
- ▶ What is the own-check plan and where can you get help for drawing it up?

Suitable premises

When you find premises that you like, check with the municipal building supervision authority that they are intended for the purpose you had in mind. This will normally guarantee that the building or premises are technically suitable for a meat establishment, for example, that they are adequately ventilated.

It is also good to contact the municipal food control authority at this early stage.

From the authority, you can confirm that the premises are suitable for your intended purpose.

What does "use prescribed in the building permit" mean?

The municipal building supervision authority approves the use of premises or a property as, for example, a restaurant, shop, office or industrial facility.

The intended use of premises is specified in their building permits, and the premises may not be used for other purposes than those approved in the building permits.

What happens if the premises have not been approved for the use that you require?

If you want to use the premises even though their intended purpose is not suitable, you will require a building permit for changing the prescribed use of the premises.

You may need to make major renovations to, for example, the ventilation or water fixtures.

Check with your municipality's building supervision whether you can apply for the building permit yourself or whether it is the task of some other party, such as the housing company.

When you are applying for a change to the prescribed use of premises, please keep in mind the following considerations:

In these situations, you will have to be prepared for planning costs, such as hiring a designer. Find out the competence requirements for designers from the municipal building supervision authority.

Building may not start until the building permit is final. Premises may not be put to a new use before the building supervision authority has approved it in a final inspection.

Can there be other obstacles to the operation of the meat establishment apart from those related to the building permit?

Check with the housing company that your intended operation can be run in the property you had in mind. The company's articles of association can include provisions regarding the use of premises.

Are the premises suitable to run your meat establishment?

When evaluating the suitability of premises for your purposes, you should, at minimum, consider whether it is possible to arrange your operations sensibly on the premises. For example, you should find out whether the premises are equipped with a sufficient number of storage rooms, water fixtures and floor drains. Pick sufficiently large or easily modifiable premises from the start if you think you might want to expand your operations at a later date.

Also consider whether the processing of foodstuffs would require a large and expensive surface renovation. The food inspector and advisory organisations will be able to advise you on these matters. Information on advisory organisations is available via the links on our website.

The Premises section of this guide also contains additional information on the requirements for premises.

Design the premises so that the following will be easy to implement:

- Do not allow customers or other outsiders entry into food-processing areas. Pets are not permitted on the premises.
- Retail sales functions must be placed in a separate space from meat-cutting and grinding and the production of meat preparations. Other processing areas, such as the packing areas, can be separated in time from retail sales. In this case, the products are packed in the shop area when the shop is not open for business. This requires the approval of the supervisory authority.
- Locate your food preparation and processing areas so that employees cannot pass through them into, for example, dressing rooms or food storage areas.
- Store non-food products so that odours or flavours cannot migrate from them into food. Also ensure that they will not pose a danger if they break.
- Remove any unnecessary items, such as non-used furniture, devices and equipment from the premises, because they gather dust. They also take up room and make cleaning more difficult.

How do you apply for the authorities' approval for your facility?

You can only begin operating after obtaining approval from the authorities. As a rule, approval is applied for in writing from the food control authority of the municipality in which your facility is located.

If the facility is connected to a slaughterhouse, approval is applied for from the Finnish Food Safety Authority, Evira.

However, reindeer slaughterhouses and facilities connected to them are approved by the Regional State Administrative Agency of Lapland.

You must describe the nature of your planned operations in the application for approval. In addition, you will need to describe your production facilities.

The easiest way is to use the application form provided by the relevant authority. The form is available from the municipality's website or food inspector. Alternatively, you can file a free-form application.

The application for approval must include the following information at minimum:

- your name, municipality of residence and contact details
- the business ID or, if you do not have one, your personal identity code
- the facility's name and street address
- the operations that will be performed at the facility (e.g., cutting plant, plant producing minced meat, plant producing meat preparations, plant producing mechanically separated meat, plant producing meat products)
- planned production volume
- estimated start date of operations
- a report of ventilation, water supply, plumbing, waste management and by-product processing
- the surface materials of production, storage, cleaning and transport facilities, as well as staff facilities
- description of any special arrangements regarding the use of the premises (such as the separation of functions in time, i.e., performing different types of work at different times)
- information on any seasonal operations

In addition, the application must include the following attachments:

- the layout, floor plan and HPAC drawings indicating:
 - the food-processing areas, the nature of the work performed in each area and the placement of equipment and furniture
 - transport routes for raw materials, ingredients and finished goods, packaging materials, by-products, and waste
 - the borders of hygiene zones, such as the borders between food-processing and waste storage areas
 - staff access routes (including maintenance, transport and cleaning)
 - locations of water fixtures, washing and disinfection facilities and floor drains
- temperatures of refrigerated facilities
- information about the purpose of each facility approved by building control authorities and any pending applications
- an own-check plan for inspection

What if you will make substantial changes?

You must apply for advance approval for any substantial changes. Substantial changes include, for example,

- starting to produce minced meat at a cutting plant;
- producing a significantly higher volume of products than stated in the application for approval; or
- expanding the facilities.

A change is substantial if it changes the nature of the operations approved by the authorities.

You may also require approval if you change the purpose of the premises. For example, if you change a packaging material storage area into a meat-processing area.

What happens after you submit your application for approval?

As a general rule, the supervisory authority is required to issue a decision on the matter within 60 days of receiving your application.

This processing time can be extended for special reasons. For example, an incomplete application can extend the processing time. The authority may ask you to provide additional required reports and documents.

Approval inspection

Before the supervisory authority can approve your facility, it must conduct an acceptance inspection.

The inspection will be carried out after you have submitted your application. In addition, the inspection cannot be carried out before your facility is almost ready to begin production.

The authority will evaluate your own-check plan

You must draw up an own-check plan before starting operations. The purpose of the own-check plan is to help you describe your operations and manage the food hygiene risks associated with them.

Before approving your facility, the authority will also evaluate whether your own-check plan covers the required matters.

You can find materials for drawing up the plan in this guide and on the websites of many food control authorities.

Drawing up the own-check plan will be discussed in more detail in the Own-check plan section of this guide.

Approval decision

When your facility is compliant with the statutory requirements, the authority will approve it. You will receive a written decision on the matter.

Your operations must correspond to a valid approval decision. If you want to change your operations at a later date, you will have to apply for approval.

When can your facility obtain a conditional approval?

In exceptional cases, the authority can issue a conditional approval for your facility even if it does not comply with all requirements.

In such cases, the basic structure and equipment of your facility must nevertheless be compliant with regulations. The basic structural requirements mean that your facility's walls, ceilings, floors, water supply, plumbing, ventilation and lighting must be in order.

In order to be approved conditionally, your facility must have only minor shortcomings, which you must subsequently fix. Only then will you receive final approval for your facility.

An example of a minor shortcoming would be an unfinished water fixture in a facility equipped with several water fixtures.

A conditional approval can be granted for a maximum of three months at a time. The authority will conduct a new inspection before the end of the three-month period.

Can your application be rejected?

The authority can reject your application for the following reasons:

1. If the structures or equipment of the facility endanger food safety and you do not fix them when requested.

2. If your application is incomplete and you do not supply the missing information when requested.
3. If the own-check plan is missing or lacking important information.

Such important information can include, for example:

- the food sampling and inspection plan; or
- the cleaning and sampling plan for premises and equipment.

Approval for the separation of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) risk material

TSE diseases include 'mad cow disease' or bovine BSE and sheep and goat scrapie.

TSE risk material in cutting plants consists of the following material from animals aged over 12 months

- bovine head meat
- bovine spinal cord left in the carcass at the slaughterhouse, for example due to a splitting error
- sheep and goat spinal cord

TSE risk material constitutes by-products of the highest risk category and must be delivered for destruction. This prevents the spread of TSE diseases.

If you want to remove TSE risk material at your cutting plant, you will require a decision by which the authority approves your facility as a TSE risk material separation institution.

Are you allowed to produce minced meat and raw meat preparations in the same room where you cut the meat?

The supervising authority may approve the production of minced meat and meat preparations in the same room where you cut meat.

In this case, the production must take place

- in an area sufficiently far away from other operations; or
- at a separate time – i.e., not at the same time as cutting meat, and the area must be cleaned between different operations.

Approval number and identification mark

After approving it, Evira will issue an approval number to your establishment. This number will be included in your establishment's identification mark, with which you must label all products packaged at your establishment. The approval number or identification mark must also be included in the commercial documents of meat deliveries.

The authorities may reserve a number for your facility from Evira in advance, before your establishment has been approved. Such a reservation does not mean that you are allowed to begin operations. However, it will give you the opportunity to, for example, have packaging materials and document templates printed in advance.

What are the costs of supervision by the authorities?

The supervisory authority will charge a fee for the approval of your establishment and recurring fees for regular supervision. Food inspectors can make inspection visits unannounced or agree on inspections with you in advance.

The amounts of the fees are determined by the municipality's tariffs. The tariffs are listed on the website of the municipality in which your establishment is located.

More information on official supervision is available via the links on our website.

Requirements for kitchen staff

Persons who process perishable foods professionally must have a hygiene passport and wear appropriate protective clothing. A hygiene passport is a certificate of competence for demonstrating familiarity with food hygiene.

If necessary, the employees must also be able to reliably demonstrate that they do not have salmonella infection.

The purpose of all these requirements is to ensure the safety of foodstuffs. These personnel requirements will be discussed in more detail in the Staff section of this guide

Summary

When you are setting up a meat establishment:

- ▶ Contact your municipality's building supervision authority and food control authority to make sure that the premises are suitable for your establishment.
- ▶ File an approval application for setting up your establishment.
- ▶ Make sure that personnel who handle meat have hygiene passports, health certificates and protective clothing.
- ▶ Draw up an own-check plan.