

LABELLING ESSENTIALS

Labels are an essential component of selling prepackaged meat products and have mandatory regulatory requirements.

What is a Prepackaged Meat Product?

A "prepackaged product means any product that is packaged in a container in such a manner that it is ordinarily sold to, or used, or purchased, by a consumer without being re-packaged".
(Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act)

Bilingual Labelling

All mandatory information on food labels (except for the name and address of the person by, or for whom, the prepackaged product was manufactured, processed, produced or packaged for resale) must be shown in both official languages, French and English.

Labels may be exempt from bilingual labelling when they meet one of the following criteria:

- they are local products sold in a local area in which one of the official languages is the mother tongue of less than 10 percent of the residents; or
- are official test market products; or
- are specialty foods, as defined by the Food and Drug Regulations.

Size of Information

All mandatory information must be printed with a minimum type height of 1.6 mm (1/16 inch), based on the lowercase letter "o" with some exceptions, e.g. Net Weight.

Common Name

The common name of a food must be shown on the principal display panel of the food label and is:

- the name prescribed by the Food and Drug Regulations, e.g., "regular ground beef", "head cheese"; or
- the name prescribed by any other federal or provincial regulation, e.g. breakfast sausage; or
- when not prescribed by regulation, the name by which the food is commonly known, e.g. boneless, skinless chicken breast.

The common name of a product should not be misleading and should not misrepresent the origin, composition or identity of the product.

Net Quantity

The numerical declaration of the net quantity for standard weight products must be declared in metric units on the principal display panel on consumer packages.

The net quantity must be rounded to three figures, unless the net quantity is below 100, when it may be rounded to two figures.

The numerals in the net weight declaration must be shown in bold face type and in the size shown in the following table:

Area of Principal Display Surface		Min Type Height of Numerals	
square cm	square inches	mm	inches
≤ 32	≤ 5	1.6	1/16
> 32 to ≤ 258	> 5 to ≤ 40	3.2	1/8
> 258 to ≤ 645	> 40 to ≤ 100	6.4	1/4
> 645 to ≤ 2580	> 100 to ≤ 400	9.5	3/8
> 2580	> 400	12.7	1/2

List of Ingredients

For meat products that have more than one ingredient or component, an ingredient listing must be present on the package or label which lists all ingredients in descending order of their presence. Water and smoke are considered as ingredients and shall be listed as such.

Allergens and gluten sources **must** be declared by their source name either in the list of ingredients or in a "Contains" statement at the end of the ingredient listing.

When the statement "Contains" is present on a label this statement must be complete and identify all common food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites at >10 ppm in the prepackaged product.

Name and Address

Either the complete name and address of the firm that prepares the meat product, or, preceded by the words "prepared for", the name and address of the firm for whom the meat product is produced or labelled, shall appear on the label of meat products.

The address must be complete enough for postage.

Meat Inspection Legend

The Meat Inspection Legend may only be applied by the registered/licensed operator and can only be applied to inspected meat products.

The Meat Inspection Legend will be in the following form and be no less than 10mm transverse measurement through the centre of the legend.



Storage Instructions

All edible meat products, not considered as shelf stable, shall be labelled with storage instructions which consist of one of the following statements, whichever is applicable:

Keep refrigerated / Garder au Froid
or
Keep frozen / Garder congelé

Durable Shelf Life Statement

"Durable life" is the period, starting on the day a food is packaged for retail sale, that the food will retain its normal wholesomeness, palatability and nutritional value, when it is stored under conditions appropriate for that product.

A prepackaged meat product that has a durable life (shelf life) of 90 days or less must include the durable life date, otherwise known as best-before date, on the package or label. This date can be on any part of the package except for the bottom.

If the year is required for clarity, the durable life date must be given with the year first (at least the last two digits), followed by the month and then the day.

For example:

Best before
04 JN 28
Meilleur avant

The following are the acceptable bilingual short forms for the months of the year:

JA for JANUARY	JL for JULY
FE for FEBRUARY	AU for AUGUST
MR for MARCH	SE for SEPTEMBER
AL for APRIL	OC for OCTOBER
MA for MAY	NO for NOVEMBER
JN for JUN	DE for DECEMBER

Production Date or Lot Code

All meat products shall be labelled with the production date or with a code identifying the production lot. This code or date of production must appear on the immediate container of prepackaged meat products or on a tag attached to it. It is possible to use the durable life date statement as an identification code of production.

Retained Water Declaration

The amount of water added and retained in raw single-ingredient meat products due to post-evisceration contact with water, in excess of naturally occurring moisture must be declared as part of the product name on the principal display panel of prepackaged products.

Raw single-ingredient meat products include e.g. dressed carcasses, parts of dressed carcasses, offal and giblets.

Nutrition Labelling

The Nutrition Facts table is mandatory for most prepackaged meat products. Prepackaged ground meat, ground meat by-product, ground poultry meat and ground poultry meat by-product must always carry a Nutrition Facts table.

The following products are exempt from displaying a Nutrition Facts table:

- raw, single-ingredient meat, meat by-product, poultry meat and poultry by-products;
- foods sold only in the retail establishment where the product is prepared and processed, including products made from a pre-mix when an ingredient other than water is added to the pre-mix; and
- individual servings of foods that are sold for immediate consumption (e.g. sandwiches or ready-made salads), when these have not been subjected to a process or special packaging, such as modified atmosphere packaging, to extend their durable life.

For more information, resources, or help with your program please contact:

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