

Draft Specifications and Standards for Meat Intended to Be Eaten Raw (Provisional Translation)

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) is going to establish specifications and standards for meat intended to be eaten raw.

Pursuant to Article 11 Paragraph 1 of the Food Sanitation Act, the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare is authorized, from the viewpoint of public health, to establish standards for producing, processing, using, cooking, or preserving food or additives to be served for the purpose of marketing or to establish specifications for the compositions of food or additives to be served for the purpose of marketing, by hearing the opinions of the Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council.

Earlier this year, there was an Enterohemorrhagic E. coli outbreak in Japan. The health authorities suspect that it was associated with raw consumption of meat. As of the end of June, there were about 160 patients including 4 deaths. To ensure food safety, the MHLW has decided to establish appropriate specifications and standards based on the act. The proposed specifications and standards will be finalized and be put into effect as early as in October.

1. Compositional specifications for meat intended to be eaten raw (in the specifications and standards, “meat” is confined to “beef excluding offal”)

- (1) Meat intended to be eaten raw shall be Enterobacteriaceae negative per 25g of sample.
- (2) Records of Enterobacteriaceae negative test results shall be retained for 1 year.

2. Standards for the processing of meat intended to be eaten raw

Meat intended to be eaten raw shall be processed in a manner that meets the requirements given below. Compliance with the requirements is equivalent to the level at which 25 samples (with 25 g each) per meat block that are randomly collected are all tested negative for Enterobacteriaceae.

- (1) Processing shall be done at a hygienic place that is definitely separated from other places and that is equipped with dedicated facilities necessary to wash and sterilize instruments and utensils. Instruments (such as processing tables) that will come in direct contact with meat blocks shall be used exclusively for the meat processing purpose. Each time a meat block is processed, the instruments used shall be washed and sterilized.
- (2) Utensils to be used for meat processing (such as cutting boards and knives) shall be of impermeable materials that are easy to wash and sterilize and to keep clean and hygienic. They shall be used exclusively for the meat processing purpose. Each time a meat block is processed, the utensils used shall be washed and sterilized using hot water of 83°C or higher.
- (3) Processing shall be done by persons who have a certain level of hygiene knowledge and skills, or it shall be done under the superintendence of these persons.

- (4) Meat blocks shall be treated in a hygienic manner so that they are not contaminated by pathogenic organisms. Any processing treatment, except for heat-sterilization, shall be done so that the temperature of meat surface will not exceed 10°C.
- (5) In processing, any treatment that is likely to help the spread of pathogenic microorganism contamination in the meat shall not be done, including tendering treatments with knives, tumbling treatments to infiltrate seasoning into the meat, and treatments to bind the meat with other meat pieces and shape one meat block .
- (6) Meat blocks to be used for processing shall be in an unfrozen state and shall be cut out from a dressed carcass in a hygienic manner.
- (7) The meat blocks treated as specified in (6) of section 2 shall be placed in clean and hygienic air-tight bags (such as plastic bags), immediately sealed, and then heat-sterilized by a method enabling at least 1 cm subsurface of the meat to be held at 60°C for at least 2 minutes or by any other method providing an comparable or superior effect. After heat-sterilization, the meat blocks shall be immediately cooled to 10°C or lower.
- (8) Conditions used to conduct the heat treatment specified in (7) of section 2 shall be recorded and the record shall be retained for 1 year. The conditions shall include the temperature of the water (or a heating plate and other utensils) used for sterilization and the time of heating.

3. Standards for the preparation of meat intended to be eaten raw at eating establishments

- (1) The requirements specified in section 2, except for (6) through (8), shall be mutatis mutandis applied.
- (2) Meat blocks to be used for preparation shall be products that have undergone the treatments specified in (6) and (7) of section 2.
- (3) Meat shall be served immediately after prepared.

4. Standards for the preservation of meat intended to be eaten raw

- (1) Meat intended to be eaten raw shall be preserved at 4°C or lower. Meat intended to be eaten raw that is in a frozen state shall be preserved at minus 15°C or lower.
- (2) Meat intended to be eaten raw shall be preserved in clean and hygienic containers.

Note: This document is an English translation of 生食用食肉に係る規格基準(案). In the case of any discrepancy between the Japanese original and the English translation, the former will take priority