



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## FOOD-SAFETY MEASURES NEED IMPROVEMENT: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Ontario needs to improve the way it follows up on violations of food-safety standards in provincially regulated slaughterhouses and meat-processing plants, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2008 Annual Report*, released today.

“Ontario has taken a number of steps to minimize food-safety risks,” McCarter said. “But we need to make improvements to better ensure the safety of meat and meat products sold in this province.”

The need for improvements was identified in a value-for-money audit of the food-safety work of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The audit found that the Ministry needs “to make sure that corrective action is taken when significant violations of its standards are found” during the inspection process to license provincially regulated slaughterhouses and meat-processing plants, which account for 10% of the animals killed for food in Ontario.

During their licensing audits, some plants had deficiency rates for the standards examined of almost 30%, many of which were repeat violations noted in previous audits.

Other findings of the report included:

- There were weaknesses in the Ministry’s inspections of dairy processing plants and distributors, including instances where licences had been renewed before inspections were completed.
- Tests on fluid milk and cheese showed bacteria counts high enough to suggest a number of processing plants might have sanitation problems.
- The Ministry has limited powers to enforce food safety for fruits and vegetables. Still, it did take the initiative of conducting laboratory tests on a wide-ranging sample of fruits and vegetables. But where it detected high levels of chemicals and contaminants, it does not have the authority to do more than educate producers on how to prevent the high levels from recurring.

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