The Vermont landscape is abundant with farmers supplying their communities with locally raised, slaughtered and processed meats. For generations, Vermonters have relied upon friends and neighbors for their meat supply, however, as the industrialized food system has grown larger, rules have been crafted to “protect” the public from potential dangers. These rules have weakened the Vermont meat slaughter and processing infrastructure and made it challenging for Vermont farmers to comply with these industrial scale regulations without making significant capital investments and going into debt. Rural Vermont believes that having community scale-appropriate regulations will help grow the market for farm fresh meat while simultaneously protecting our food supply and enabling farmers to continue Vermont’s cultural heritage.

**IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ON-FARM PERSONAL SLAUGHTER REGULATIONS 2021**

In the 2021 legislative session, significant gains were made concerning on-farm slaughter. H. 420, the miscellaneous agricultural bill, started in the House with a provision that repeals the “sunset” of the law and thereby secures this important practice of food sovereignty in perpetuity - a change that Rural Vermont and the on-farm slaughter community has been seeking for many years. The Senate amended the bill to double the allowances for on-farm slaughter of livestock (in 6 V.S.A. § 3311a) from 5 to 10 cattle, 15 to 30 pigs, 40 to 80 sheep and goats, or a total combined live weight of 12,000 pounds. The legislature also tasked AAFM with finding a legal solution to allow for CSAs with animal shares which would make the OFS process far more accessible for both consumers and farmers by simplifying the organizing process. In addition, H.315 (2021) allocated $3M for the Working Lands Program whereof $500k are for slaughter, meat processing, and related training programs. Farms can apply for funding for custom slaughter facilities.

**IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ON-FARM PERSONAL SLAUGHTER REGULATIONS 2019**

The 2019 legislative session extended the July 1, 2019 sunset of the on-farm-slaughter law and Rural Vermont successfully advocated to add our improvements to a large rural economic development bill to allow farmers to sell live animals raised on their farm to more than one person (multiple owners), and carcasses to be halved and quartered at the time of slaughter. It also requires that the on-farm slaughter be performed according to humane standards that already exist in Vermont law (see Act 83 2019).

**THREE PATHWAYS TO SLAUGHTER FOUR LEGGED ANIMALS IN VERMONT:**

1. **On-Farm Slaughter**

Farmers can sell a living animal to multiple persons who then either slaughter the animal themselves on the farm or hire an itinerant slaughterer to do so. Farmers are not allowed to slaughter the animals themselves and can only assist in the slaughter to the extent of providing space, equipment and appropriate disposal of the offal. Meat from an on-farm slaughtered animal cannot be sold, traded or gifted after slaughter and is for personal use by the owners of the carcass, their family, employees and/or nonpaying guests. This is one of
the personal use exemptions to the licensing and inspection requirements of the law. On-Farm Slaughter does not require a “custom” or inspected slaughter facility.

2. Custom Slaughter Facility
According to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, a custom facility is a building that can be located on a farm, and gets a license from - and is inspected by - the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to verify that certain sanitary standards are being met. These standards include requirements such as washable walls and floors, hot/cold potable running water, sufficient light, ventilation, plumbing, drainage, and sewage disposal. If livestock is processed in a custom facility, the individual packages of meat will be stamped “Not for Sale” and must be returned to the owner(s) of the livestock for their personal use, their employees, and/or their non-paying guests.

3. USDA Inspected Slaughter Facility
An inspected facility is a building where livestock are killed in the presence of a USDA inspector. The facility must meet certain standards and follow certain procedures. If livestock are processed in an inspected facility, the meat may be sold from the farm, at farmers’ markets, to restaurants and retail establishments, and it may be sold in pieces, such as ground meat, steaks, tenderloin, etc. It must be labeled according to USDA standards to be sold in this way.

Requirements for On-Farm Slaughter
Updated with the recent amendments of 2021 (see *) to the on-farm slaughter provision in [6 V.S.A § 3311a:.

1. The law allows for multiple owners to purchase livestock while alive from a farmer who is raising the livestock.
2. The farmer must be registered with the Secretary of Ag as selling livestock for on-farm-slaughter. The registration is at no cost, does not make you subject to inspection, and must be renewed at the beginning of every calendar year.
3. The farmer is required to keeps records of each on-farm slaughter conducted and report quarterly to the Secretary of Ag on a form provided by the Secretary. Due dates for quarterly reporting are:
   - First calendar quarter ending March 31: report due on or before April 15
   - Second calendar quarter ending June 30: report due on or before July 15
   - Third calendar quarter ending September 30: report due on or before October 15
   - Fourth calendar quarter ending December 31: report due on or before January 15.

   ➔ If a farmer does not report conducted slaughter to the Secretary of Ag, enforcement actions may include a suspension of the authority to sell animals to an individual/s for on-farm-slaughter.

   ➔ You can find the online registration and record keeping forms at https://agriculture.vermont.gov, by following these steps from the homepage: select Food Safety, then Meat & Poultry Inspection, then Forms & Applications.
4. The individual/s who purchased the livestock or an itinerant slaughterman they hire performs the act of slaughtering.
5. With approval from the farmer who sold the livestock, the slaughter must occur on the farm where the animal was raised.
6. The slaughter is conducted under sanitary conditions, which means the site on the farm is clean and free of contaminants and designed in a way to prevent the occurrence of water pollution and the adulteration of the carcass or the meat.
7. The farmer **does not assist** in the slaughter of the livestock. That means a farmer may not perform the act of slaughtering or butchering an animal. It does not prevent the farmer from providing a site on the farm for slaughter, implements for slaughter, or the service of disposal of the offal from slaughter. 

8. *The NEW law allows for **not more than 30 swine; 10 cattle; 80 sheep or goats**; or any combination of swine, cattle, sheep, or goats, provided that **not more than 12,000 pounds of live weight** of livestock are slaughtered per year.*

9. The **law** allows for the carcass to be **halved or quartered** by the owner(s) or itinerant slaughterer. The **meat cannot be sold after slaughter**, and is for the personal use of the owners of the carcass, their employees and/or nonpaying guests.

10. The livestock is slaughtered according to a “**humane method**”, as that term is defined in 6 V.S.A § 3131 (6) meaning:
    - A method whereby the animal is rendered insensible to pain by mechanical, electrical, chemical, or other means that is rapid and effective before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.
    - A method in accordance with ritual requirements of the Jewish faith or any other religious faith whereby the animal suffers loss of consciousness by anemia of the brain caused by the simultaneous and instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries with a sharp instrument.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

- Reach out to us if you are or want to be active regarding on-farm-slaughter!
    - Join our network of supporters for on-farm slaughter of livestock (stay informed)
    - Join our stakeholder group and engage in policy making to improve the on-farm slaughter law (become active)
    - Let us know if you’re interested in hosting a on-farm slaughter workshop
- Feedback: If you are actively engaged in on-farm-slaughter, please give us feedback on the current amended regulations, our outreach work, and how to improve both further.
- Registration and Reporting: **The Legislature and the Agency of Agriculture have made clear that evidence of compliance with registration/reporting requirements from farmers are important for a shared understanding of the prevalence of this practice around the State. The current lack of that data affects our ability to successfully advocate to further improve the regulatory landscape.**
  
  We welcome your feedback on the reporting and record keeping requirements.
- Sign up for Rural Vermont’s email list and volunteer to help promote our campaigns!
- Join Rural Vermont as a dues paying member at www.ruralvermont.org.

**HOW CAN WE HELP?**

- Let us know if there are questions, concerns, resources, etc. that you have or need.
- Let us know if you need help finding itinerant slaughterers in your region.
- Ask us to mail you a hard copy of the VAAFM registration and record keeping forms.

Contact [caroline@ruralvermont.org](mailto:caroline@ruralvermont.org) or call the Rural Vermont office at (802) 223-7222.