



Environmental Permits for Small Scale Poultry Processing –

Small scale poultry processing facilities are generally regulated at the Federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and at the State level by the TN Department of Agriculture (TDA). Facilities may also need environmental permits which are regulated by the TN Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). Small scale poultry processing is considered 20,000 or fewer poultry per year.

This page is a quick synopsis for new and existing processors of what environmental permits may be needed to build a new or expand an existing small-scale poultry processing facility. More complete information can be found on the TDEC Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) Small Scale Meat Processing website: <https://www.tn.gov/environment/program-areas/sbeap-small-business-environmental-assistance/agribusiness/small-scale-meat-processing.html>. The TDEC SBEAP can provide further assistance to small scale poultry processors by providing additional information and/or assisting with the completion of permit applications. Because local government regulations may differ from state government regulations, you should contact your local municipality to learn about any requirements they may have.

Construction of a new facility or expansion of an existing facility

Authorization under the [Tennessee Construction General Permit](#) from the Division of Water Resources is required for soil disturbance greater than 1 acre or less than 1 acre if part of a common plan of development (ex: commercial or residential subdivision). General permit issuance by the Division of Water Resources may take up to 30 days after receipt of a complete application.

Authorization under an [Aquatic Resources Alterations Permit](#) from the Division of Water Resources is required for applicable alterations to streams and wetlands. Examples of application alterations include stream crossings for roads, an outfall to a stream, or filling in a wetland. General permit issuance by the Division of Water Resources may take up to 30 days after receipt of a complete application.

An [Asbestos Notification](#) should be submitted to Division of Air Pollution Control or delegated county's air pollution program if an existing structure will be demolished or renovated. This notification should be submitted, even if there are no asbestos containing materials present, to notify the Division of Air Pollution Control that the materials have been evaluated and found to be free of asbestos.

If the facility will have an air emission source, then an [Air Quality Construction Permit](#) application would be needed from the Division of Air Pollution Control. Some common air emission sources that might occur at a poultry processing facility are:

- wood or oil-fired boilers,
- natural gas boilers greater than 10 MMBTU/hr.,
- incinerator for leftover carcasses (Agricultural exemptions apply for smaller incinerators at farms),
- or a smoking/curing operation.

Air Pollution Construction permits should be applied for 90 days prior to beginning construction of the source.

Operations - Drinking Water

If new drinking water lines are being constructed from the municipal water supply line to the facility, the Division of Water Resources **must be notified of** and approve this construction.

If drinking water from the local municipality is not available, a drinking water well may be installed on the property by a **licensed well driller**. The Division of Water Resources must be **notified of the installation of the well**. The licensed well driller typically completes and submits these forms to the Division.

Operations - Wastewater Disposal for Sanitary and Process Water

If available, wastewater should be sent to the local municipal wastewater treatment plant. Contact your local municipality to learn if any pretreatment is required. Otherwise, a septic system may be used.

A **Septic System Construction Permit** from the Division of Water Resources is required to construct a new or modify an existing septic system to dispose of wastewater. Due to the biological composition of blood and offal, TDEC discourages sending these waste streams to the septic system. A Septic System Construction Permit application would be needed 45 days before beginning construction.

The **Underground Injection Control Permit – Class V** from the Division of Water Resources is required for poultry processors discharging wastewater into a subsurface sewage disposal system. This application should be submitted prior to or in conjunction with the Septic System Construction Permit.

Operations - Waste/Offal Disposal

Similar to the process water, offal and carcass disposal will remain an issue following construction of the facility. Some options are:

- **Composting**: Division of Solid Waste Management can provide information on **composting** correctly.
- **Service provider**: These would be services that haul off collected offal for proper disposal. TDEC does not provide recommendations for specific potential service providers.
- **Incineration**: Installing an incineration unit may allow for disposal of offal and carcasses. An **Air Quality Construction Permit** application should be submitted to the Division of Air Pollution Control 90 days prior to installing the incineration unit.

Operations - Boilers, Incinerators, and other air sources

Following construction of the source, an **Air Quality Operating Permit** from the Division of Air Pollution Control is required for air emission sources.

- Operating permits should be applied for within 30 days of start-up of the source to replace the Construction permit with an Operating permit.
- Any required recordkeeping and reporting will be outlined in the permit.

If your facility has an air emissions source that has not been permitted previously, even though it is an existing source, it would still need to go through the **Air Quality Construction Permit** application step. Also, if a facility is expanding an existing air emissions source (such as replacing a boiler with a larger boiler or one that uses a different fuel), that would constitute reconstruction and require a new construction permit application.

DISCLAIMER: This guidance covers the majority of permits that would be required for small scale poultry processing. To discuss specific operations for individual facilities, please contact the TDEC Small Business Environmental Assistance Program to learn if any other permits or notifications are needed.