

[1] Raw meat must be chilled to reduce the growth rate of pathogenic bacteria. Raw meat should be placed in containers to prevent juice dripping onto other food. Freezing keeps meat safe. There is also less risk of dripping juices contaminating other products of the storage space.

It is illegal to use preservative on fresh meat.

Packaging creates a physical barrier to cross contamination. Covering makes it last longer and maintain better quality.

[2] Vacuum packing helps make the storage time longer as it removes air. This meat can last 6-10 weeks, depending on the type of meat and storage temperature.

[3] Modified Atmospheric Packaging (MAP) or gas flushing helps to preserve foods by replacing some or all of the oxygen inside the packet with other gases such as carbon dioxide or nitrogen. This slows down the growth of bacteria. Different ratios of gases may change the look of the meat (the red meat will turn purplish) and make it less attractive to buyers. Producers must work out the right balance. Carbon monoxide is sometimes used in small quantities as part of the MAP process—it helps to keep the bright red meat colour—but it stops it browning naturally with age so it makes it difficult to tell how fresh the meat is. This meat can last 10-14 weeks depending on the meat type and storage temperature.

MAP requires the correct type of plastic packaging that will seal and retain the gases.

All MAP food must be labelled with a 'best before' or 'use by' date. For meats it is recommended that it is the best before date that is applied. Storage instructions are essential as MAP products still require strict temperature control. Cooler temperatures help control the growth of micro-organisms and also improve the effect of the gases on the bacteria. Instructions should say what to do once the packet is opened.



[4] Meat that is sold in NZ is sometimes (most commonly) placed on a polystyrene tray and covered in polyethylene overwrap (shrink wrap). The shrink wrapped meat has a maximum shelf life of 7-10 days, depending on the microbial numbers at the time of packaging. The shrink wrap does not offer protection from food borne disease causing bacteria on the meat. Pathogens such as salmonella, listeria and campylobacter can grow on the meat, so food poisoning at home can be a problem if sound food safety practices are not upheld when the meat is unwrapped and prepared for cooking.

[5] Or it is packaged in an atmosphere that contains 70—80 % oxygen and the balance carbon dioxide. This latter method is described as 'high oxygen atmosphere deep draw pack'. This meat can last 3-4 weeks, depending on the meat type and as long as it is not stored above 0C. It is the colour deterioration that limits the shelf life, rather than microbial spoilage. This packing method does control the growth of food poisoning bacteria. The high oxygen content slows down the growth of anaerobic bacteria such as clostridium botulinum. The high carbon dioxide controls the growth of aerobic pathogens eg salmonella, E Coli.

[7] General requirements

Legibility—must be easy to read and in English

Labels must tell the truth - information must be clear and accurate

[8] Date marking—either use by or best by date

Name or description of the food

Some foods have prescribed names eg fermented comminuted meat products like pepperoni. Because New Zealanders generally would be unlikely to expect a food to contain horse meat, simply labelling the meat component generically as “meat” would be misleading under food and fair trading legislations. Horse meat would be a term that clearly describes the nature of the food.

Name and address of the business - in case they need to be contacted

Warning and advice - for particular ingredients including those that might cause allergens

Ingredients list

Percentage of the characteristic ingredients eg percentage of meat.

[9] There are also labels such as:

the 100% New Zealand Pork, PigCare Accredited logo. This is to guarantee you are purchasing only pork that has been raised in NZ.



The New Zealand Beef & Lamb Quality Mark, which not only confirms the beef or lamb is from New Zealand, it also has to reach the highest standards of tenderness and food safety.



the Heart Foundation Two Ticks. New Zealand beef and lamb displaying the Quality Mark and this label have less than 4% saturated fat and trimmed of visible fat to no more than 5mm.



Halal

