

## Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

**SAFETY ALERT****Safe use and guarding of meat processing machinery**

The purpose of this safety alert is to highlight the risks associated with using small meat processing machines for slicing, mincing, grinding or tenderising meat and meat products.

**Background**

There are a number of imported meat slicing machines that can expose operators to a serious risk of injury. They are often found in takeaway outlets and restaurants, although butchers and caterers may also use similar types of meat processing machines.



**Photograph 1** – A meat slicing machine.

**Contributing factors**

The main hazards are:

- The rotating cutting blades can be accessed through the feed hopper (see Photograph 2) and the dispenser chute. Contact with the moving blades can cause severe injuries.



**Photograph 2** – The feed hopper showing unguarded access to cutting blades.

- The cutting blades are susceptible to rusting and food residue can build up on surfaces, which are difficult to access for cleaning and sanitising. Where the surfaces contacted by food are not effectively cleaned, food health issues can arise. For further information see the food safety link below.



**Photograph 3** – Cutting blades exposed with the feed hopper and top cover removed.

- The feed hopper and top cover are regularly removed for cleaning purposes, further exposing the blades (see Photograph 3). This type of machine will continue to operate with the hopper or cover removed, increasing the risk of serious injury.
- The conductive metal body poses a greater risk of electric shock if the unit has not been manufactured and maintained in accordance with relevant electrical standards, particularly when using water to clean the machine while it is connected to the power socket.
- There is no emergency stop device to quickly stop the machine in an emergency.

There may be additional hazards applicable to these and other types of meat processing machines.

Importers, suppliers and persons in control of a workplace have an obligation to ensure that meat processing machinery is safe and without risk to health when used properly. Any person who imports plant (instead of purchasing the plant from a local supplier) for use in a business or undertaking, takes on the obligations of a supplier even if importing or supplying plant is not their usual business. Under workplace health and safety legislation, a supplier has the additional obligation to test and ensure that the plant is safe to use.

### Action required

A risk assessment should be conducted at various stages throughout the life of a meat processing machine—when it is new, relocated or following an incident. People who conduct a risk assessment of meat processing machinery should consider whether the equipment has (or is required to be fitted with) the following controls:

- Guarding from exposure to moving parts using:
  - appropriate fixed guarding, which requires tools for their removal, for example distance guards (a feed chute)
  - interlocked movable guards that cannot be opened until the machine has come to a stop. The control system should not

allow the machine to be started while the guards are removed.

- The existence and appropriate location of emergency stop device(s).
- The safety-related parts of control systems, such as interlocks and emergency stops, must comply with appropriate technical standards.
- The design and construction of the machine must ensure safe access for maintenance, effective cleaning and sanitisation.
- The machine must comply with the relevant legislation for electrical safety.
- The machine must be accompanied by information about the way it must be used to ensure health and safety.

These controls are not exhaustive and are provided as a guide only. Due to the variety of meat processing machinery used in industry, the controls selected should be based on a risk assessment.

### Further information

The [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#) imposes health and safety obligations on all persons conducting a business or undertaking whether as employers, self-employed persons,, designers, manufacturers, suppliers, installers, owners of plant and workers.

The [Electrical Safety Act 2002](#) and [Electrical Safety Regulation 2002](#) provide detailed requirements for electrical safety of equipment.

Food safety information and links to legislation is available at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety/)

More information on the safe use and design of machinery is included in the *Plant Code of Practice 2005*. Guidance on conducting risk assessments can be found in the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007*.

Further information is available from [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) or by calling the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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