

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

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www.mass.gov/agr



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September 12, 2025

Re: Animal / Barn Inspection Books 2025 Inspections

[Please read these instructions!](#)

THIS BOOK MUST BE COMPLETED AND MAILED BACK TO THE DEPARTMENT BY JANUARY 1, 2026.

Greetings:

Enclosed is the barn inspection book(s) to be used for your 2025 inspections. The annual barn inspections are overseen by MDAR and performed by the Municipal Animal Inspector. For those of you who have been the Inspector of Animals in your city or town for quite some time, you know that the Division of Animal Health has been doing its best to collect information on the numbers of domestic animals and their locations around the state. If you are new to the job, I can't stress enough how essential the collection of these data becomes to developing a response plan to an emergency and implementing it. The information contained in these books has been used by our Department and cooperating agencies on several occasions while assisting people who found themselves unable to get their animals clear of potentially dangerous situations. Our ability to efficiently allocate resources to the most vulnerable areas during a time of need relies on the accuracy of the information you provide. The more accurate and complete the information you give us, is the more prepared we will be to respond when necessary.

You are asked to inspect every premises where any number of livestock or poultry, including horses, are being housed. We do not include bees or household pets, like dogs and cats, but potbellied pigs should be included as they can harbor the same illnesses as swine raised for food. Rabbits only need to be counted if they are being raised for sale or meat; one or two being kept as a pet does not need to be included in the inspection. An inspector is not able to perform an inspection on their own property. If you or your immediate family keeps animals in your inspection jurisdiction, then the municipality will require an additional inspector to perform that inspection. Ashley Kraft will work with your town on these matters, please contact her in such a case.

For each property you inspect, we need **the specific street name and number where the premises is located**. Please fill out all the information at the top of the page for each location, including the zip code. Many municipalities have more than one zip code; for us to get the most out of the data you collect, it is important that we have complete and correct address information for every property you inspect. This information is critical to pinpointing locations of animals on computer-generated maps of towns and counties to assist in planning any disease control or natural disaster response. **Please indicate the specific date the inspection was conducted**, so we will know exactly when the animals and their conditions were last observed. We also need the phone number and other relevant contact information of the animal owner. Though it may not be readily available, we ask you to do your best to complete all of the information requested. And as always, we ask that you **print as neatly as possible**. There are three copies for each premise, white, pink and yellow. The pink copy is given to the owner. The yellow copy is retained with your own records. **The white copy is left in the book.** We ask that you complete all of your inspections and return **the entire bound book (with state copies intact)** to the Department **by January 1, 2026.**

If you see something during your inspections that doesn't look right to you, please contact MDAR immediately so we can start working to solve the problem right away. Any premises that appears to have a disease problem must be your last stop of the day – we do not want to compound problems by bringing them from one farm to the next. If you have animals of your own at home, make sure to clean and disinfect yourself before having any contact with other animals. In order to decrease the possibility of spreading a disease, we want you to take reasonable bio-security measures by either wearing disposable shoe covers or cleaning and disinfecting footwear between farms. Lastly, make your inspections from

a reasonable distance from the animals. Be sure you're close enough to see any signs of illness in the animals, but far enough to prevent any unnecessary contact.

You are required to get permission from the owner before conducting the inspection but try to avoid too much advanced notification. **If the owner would like you to inspect without themselves being present, you need to get their authorization in writing.** You do not need to check ID but ask a simple question to ensure you are meeting with the owner, like "Are you the owner that takes care of the animals?" Boarding facility managers will be able to provide permission to inspect their property and animals readily seen. When inspecting a boarding facility please make efforts to open communication between the facility manager and animal owners. We want to be sure we're seeing the animals as they are normally maintained. These inspections are designed to ensure the safety of everyone's animals. Feel free to remind owners that the information written in the book is strictly confidential and will only be used to further develop our emergency response plans. **Owners that are unwilling to consent to an inspection should be reported to MDAR.** Declining or not returning communication will NOT preclude the inspection, MDAR will assist you on next steps.

We'd like for you to share some information with any poultry owners in town. The Department currently has a program that provides free Salmonella Pullorum and Avian Influenza testing for all chickens, turkeys and game birds in the state. This **testing is required** on any flock whose owner sells, gives away, or otherwise moves any live poultry or hatching eggs **within the Commonwealth**. Any poultry owners who are interested in scheduling testing should contact the Division of Animal Health at (617) 626-1795.

While performing the annual Barn Inspections we are not asking to check animal ID tags or note ear tag numbers, but we ask to verify that the animals do have ear tags or appropriate ID. Cattle, swine, sheep, and goats should be individually identified with ear tags if they are 18 months of age or older. We wouldn't be looking for proof of age beyond asking the owner how long they've had them. If it's over a year, they'll likely be old enough to require tags. If they don't have tags, please get a reason from the owner as to why this is the case and let them know the animals are supposed to have tags. The owner should call Carry Shulock-Sexton at (857) 348-3922 for tag information and the animal inspector should report this to MDAR.

We are also requesting your help in improving compliance with the state requirements for the licensing of horse-riding stables and riding instructors. **MGL Chapter 128, section 2B states: "Every person engaged in the business of operating a riding school or a stable where horses are kept for hire, shall obtain a license..."** Additionally, any person providing any type of instruction to the general public aboard or attached to any equine must have a Massachusetts Riding Instructors License. We would greatly appreciate your help in educating horse owners about these requirements. Please contact the Department by calling Michael Gold at (857) 348-3940 or e-mail Michael.Gold@mass.gov for further information or with any questions regarding riding stable or riding instructor licensing.

These inspections are **confidential (just like the rabies quarantine orders) the data collected is not shared** and you cannot provide your inspection slips to anyone, including other Town officials, for any reason. For the same reason, you may not conduct these inspections with other town officials; only only appointed animal inspectors in the municipality can perform the inspection. The only other authorized personnel that can accompany the inspector is a municipal police officer (please contact MDAR if you have questions). If someone is approaching you and asking for this information, they should be referred directly to MDAR. We ask that you not confuse the property owners by discussing municipal permitting issues, other town concerns, etc. while conducting these inspections. **You are representing MDAR on these inspections, not the municipality. Contact MDAR immediately with any questions or concerns.** The annual inspections are **for emergency preparedness purposes such as disease outbreaks or evacuations**. Our protection of this data is why we have such a high rate of voluntary access to these properties.

I fully understand the difficulties that can arise when doing these inspections. I know that scheduling conflicts can cause an individual inspection to drag on for weeks. However, I want you to understand how important this information is to us. The data contained in these books allows us to quickly make risk assessments for neighborhoods, towns or counties should we find ourselves facing a natural or man-made disaster. Having an understanding of where help needs to be concentrated in such a case gives us the ability to use our resources more efficiently. I greatly appreciate all the hard work you do for us.



Michael Cahill, Director
Division of Animal Health
Massachusetts Dept. of Agricultural Resources

Barn Inspection Owner Handout:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/annual-barn-inspection-the-why-who-and-what-to-expect/download>

Scan QR Code:



MDAR BARN INSPECTION CONTACTS

Please contact MDAR immediately with questions/concerns.
Inspections are at the direction of MDAR, not the municipality.
Failed inspections will require follow up.

Barn Inspections Questions or Concerns
Rabies Program Coordinator
Ashley Kraft
Call 617-626-1810
Email Ashley.Kraft@mass.gov

Animal ID/Tags and Import/Export
Disease Traceability Coordinator
Carry Shulock- Sexton
Call 857-348-3922
Email Carry.Shulock-Sexton@mass.gov

Poultry Questions
Poultry Program Coordinator
Megan Megrath
Call 617-626-1798
Email Megan.Megrath@mass.gov

Horse Stable Questions
Michael Gold
Call 857-348-3940
Email Michael.Gold@mass.gov

Beehives are NOT included on the inspection.

For questions, please refer owners to contact:
MDAR Apiary Program
Call (508) 281-6784
Email bees@mass.gov

MDAR Return Mailing Address: (Keep your yellow copies, Mail the book with the white copies intact)

EOEEA, MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources, Division of Animal Health, 100 Cambridge St. 9th floor, Boston, MA 02114

Barn Inspection Check List:

COMPLETE IN ADVANCE

- Notify your supervisor that you are beginning the MDAR annual Barn Inspections.
- Prepare the list of properties and owner contact information
 - If you do not know where properties are located, please contact MDAR
- Prepare for an Exigent (life or death) situation.

In situations where an animal's life is at risk, it's ideal to secure the scene with a search warrant (Police can assist in urgent situations) but if the animal may die in the time it takes to get a search warrant, then the situation is Exigent; you must immediately contact a veterinarian and Police to get on scene.

- Prepare a list of veterinarians that could respond on scene
- Have a device available to reach the police department (i.e. working cellphone or radio)
- Prepare Inspection Supplies (work with your local Board of Health and Supervisor to get materials); Example Supplies:
 - Barn book (mailed to you by MDAR)
 - Office Supplies: clipboard, pen, notebook
 - Footwear: Tingly boots are ideal (slips on over regular footwear), shoes with easy to clean material and grooves
 - disinfection product (see below)
 - Gallon jug(s) of water (as needed for disinfectant)
 - Scrub brush, bucket, pump sprayer
 - Disposable gloves
 - Disposable booties
 - Trash bag (for disposable items)
- Prepare a cleaning and disinfection plan (work with your local Board of Health and Supervisor)
 - There are a number of products on the market you can use. For any disinfectant you choose, follow the manufacturer dilution instructions and allow for appropriate contact time (according to labeled instructions). Do NOT combine chemicals.
 - Our state team uses Virkon S which comes as powder or tablets. We found tablets are safer (powder could aerosolize), we use tablet form and place it in a water bucket.
 - Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide (AHP, Rescue, Oxivir) is effective in the presence of residual organic material.

Bleach products may pose greater safety risks to humans and animals compared to AHP. Bleach products are corrosive to surfaces, particularly when used long-term. Bleach products do not work if any organic material is present. Bleach products are not a good choice for porous surfaces.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Instructions: ** Clean/disinfect footwear before and after EACH inspection **

1. Remove organic material from the surface of footwear (overt fur, dirt, leaves, grass, feces, mud, etc.)- could use hose if the farmer has one available, or water and scrub brush.
 2. Use the proper concentration of disinfectant- spray/apply disinfectant with pump sprayer, scrub brush, etc.
 - a. The surface should stay wet with disinfectant for a specific minimum length of time specified on the label
 - b. Follow all safety instructions
 - c. Do not mix different disinfectants together
- Prepare handouts to bring with you on the inspection
 - Barn Inspection Owner Handout (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/annual-barn-inspection-the-why-who-and-what-to-expect/download>)
 - 2025 Barn Inspection Cover letter (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-animal-inspector-resources>)
 - Poultry Resources (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/poultry-program>)
 - Best Management resources (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-best-management-practices-bmps>)
 - Equine Program resources (<https://www.mass.gov/equine-programs>)
 - Preventing Wildlife Conflict Resources (<https://www.mass.gov/problems-with-wildlife>)
 - Make contact with the owner to schedule (via call, letter, knock on door/leave door tag)
 - To help communicate the inspection use the Barn Inspection Owner Handout and a copy of this cover letter
 - Document communications. If the owner declines the inspection or is not returning communication, then contact MDAR

COMPLETE DAY OF INSPECTION

- Receive owner consent and immediately inspect or schedule the inspection for upcoming date/time
- Clean and disinfect your footwear when arriving
- Inspect the animals with the owner (if the owner is not present then get their consent in writing prior to inspecting)
 - Observe ALL animal areas
 - Avoid touching animals and surfaces
 - Do not directly enter the chicken coop (observe from an outside area)
- Provide the Owner with their Copy of the Inspection Slip (Pink copy)
- Clean and disinfect your footwear when leaving
- Call MDAR if you observe concerns, reinspection may be needed. If there is a possible disease concern, do not continue additional property inspections, stop all inspections and CONTACT MDAR.
- Animal Inspector maintains yellow copy of inspection slip with animal inspector records (note: these documents are not public record)
- Once all inspections are completed, mail the entire book with the white copies to MDAR