

# Proper Labeling: Retail Meat Sales

## Label Requirements for Retail Meat Markets

All meat products, retail-exempt meat products included, are required to be properly labeled, regardless of where they are processed. Each pre-packaged product available for consumer self-selection must comply with labeling requirements. The full labeling requirements are described in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9. § 317.2 Labels: definition; required features and ND Food Code 3-602.11 Food Labels.

**Retail-Exempt Meat:** Retail stores exempt from the requirement of having a continuous inspection of the preparation of meat products, but only when both of the following are met:

- The sale of meat is equal to or less than the normal retail quantities set by regulation.
- Only federally- or state-inspected and passed product is handled and used in the preparation of any product.
  - The product must be received in the original packaging that contains a state or federal 'inspected & passed' legend.
  - Packages that have been opened and further handled (i.e. re-portioned) at another retail establishment are not eligible.

## Common Questions and Issues with Product Labeling

### Inadequate Ingredient Statements

The ingredients for meat products must include all the sub-ingredients found in the seasonings or other components. For example, "cheese" is not the ingredient.

The "cultured pasteurized milk, water, salt, sodium phosphate, natural flavoring, sorbic acid (preservative), added color, enzymes, corn starch and/or cellulose (to prevent caking), natamycin (preservative)" is the ingredient list that must be listed within the ingredient statement. Ingredient statements take up label space, but every sub-ingredient is required.

### Improper Use of "Safe Handling Instructions"

This infographic is required to be applied to all products that contain raw meat or raw poultry. It is not appropriate to apply this infographic to fully cooked, ready-to-eat product(s).

## Special Handling Instructions

Packaged foods that require special handling to maintain wholesome conditions shall have those requirements prominently displayed. For example, "Keep Refrigerated or Frozen."

## Net Weight Statements

If the label is larger than 5 square inches, then the size of the printed wording "Net Weight" is to be at least 1/8th inch tall. Most label machines' font size is too small for the size of the label. The "Net Weight" must be on the bottom 30% of the label as well.

## Nutrition Facts Information

This may be posted at the point of sale for retail-exempt products and labeling of each package is voluntary. Small businesses are exempt from mandatory nutrition facts if they meet both of the following requirements:

- Fewer than 500 employees.
- Less than 100,000 pounds of each product based on nutrient profile made per year.

## Required Parts of a Retail Meat Label

1. Product Name with Product Description Statement.
2. Ingredient and Allergen Statements.
3. Name and Place of Business.
4. Net Weight Statement.
5. Special Handling Statements.
6. Safe Handling Instructions Infographic (not appropriate for ready-to-eat products).

## Proper Retail Meat Label Example

- **Product Name with Product Description Statement:** BBQ Seasoned Steak Strips.  
Seasoned Strips of Raw Sirloin Beef Steak in Barbeque Sauce
- **Ingredient and Allergen Statements:**
  - Ingredients: Beef, barbeque sauce (high fructose corn syrup, water, distilled vinegar, tomato puree [water, tomato paste], salt, food starch-modified, contains 2% or less of: soybean oil, sauce blend [water, hydrolyzed corn and soy protein, salt], spice, onion powder, dehydrated garlic, natural and artificial flavor caramel color, colored with (yellow 6, red 40, titanium dioxide, blue 1), pepper, salt, mono-sodium glutamate, garlic powder, onion powder.
  - Contains: Soy (allergen statement)
- **Name and Place of Business:**
  - Generic Store. 123 Front St., Anytown, ND 00000.

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- Company logo.
- **Net Weight Statement:** Net Weight 6 oz.
- **Special Handling Statements:** Keep Refrigerated or Frozen.
- **Safe Handling Instructions:**
  - This product was prepared from inspected and passed meat and/ or poultry. Some food products may contain bacteria that could cause illness if the product is mishandled or cooked improperly. For your protection, follow these safe handling instructions.
  - Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave.
  - Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and hands after touching raw meat or poultry.
  - Cook thoroughly.
  - Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.

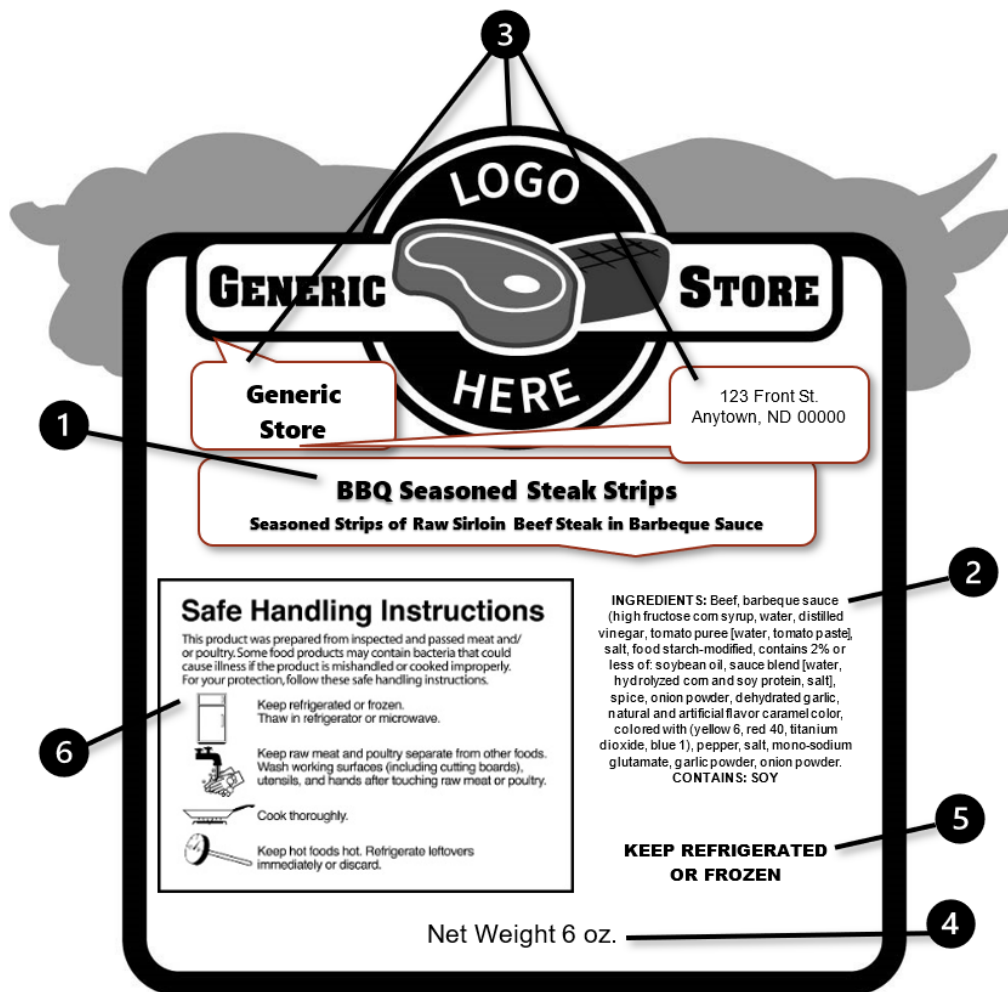


Figure 1: Retail meat label example with required parts outlined.

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### **Health Response and Licensure • Food and Lodging**

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