



The State of Israel
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Ministry of Health

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Guidelines for the Shelf Life of Fresh Meat and Fish (Refrigerated or Frozen)

The shelf life of foods is intended to ensure the Israeli population that the products they consume are of the highest quality and safety. These guidelines function to set out the rules regarding the shelf life of fresh meat and fish and to clarify to producers and importers how to abide by the different requirements in Israeli legislation regarding shelf life, including paragraph 3 of Commodities and Services Order (Date Labeling of Meat and Fish Products) - 1983 and paragraph 3.3 of Israel Standard SI 1145.

General

The shelf life of a product is defined as the length of time that a product retains its specific characteristics (physical, chemical, and organoleptic) and is safe to consume.

The shelf life of a product is influenced by many different factors including but not limited to: the raw material used, the additives introduced, the manufacturing process, the preservation process used, the type of packaging, the consumer's intended use, and the storage method of the product. These factors are under the producer's control and therefore the producer decides the shelf life of the products he manufactures.

Responsibility for the safety of food lies with the producer/importer. Within the framework of this responsibility, the producer must determine the shelf life of his products and label them with said shelf life. The importer is responsible to make available all relevant information regarding the product's shelf life and to ensure its authenticity from the producer.

Maximum Shelf Life

In a small number of products of animal origin, a maximum shelf life has been determined in Israeli legislation and in guidance documents of the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Agriculture. The



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producer is therefore able to determine a shelf life equal to or less than the shelf life determined in Israeli legislation.

This guidance document replaces the guidance document that was promulgated on 26 February 2012 regarding the shelf life of fresh meat and fish. From December 1, 2017, the shelf life of fresh meat and fish will be determined as delineated in Annex A.

When determining the shelf life of a product, the manufacturing date is defined as the slaughtering date, even if it was packaged at a later date.

The rules delineated in this guidance document applies to all meat and fish that abide by the requirements, including cuts of meat that are packaged separately.

Dr. Sergio Dolev
Director, Control of Animal Products Department
Israel Veterinary Services and Animal Health
Ministry of Agriculture

Dr. Ynon Yoni
Director, Veterinary Unit
Food Control Services
Ministry of Health



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Annex A- Shelf Life Limits that are not in Israeli legislation:

Animal Type		Temperature	Maximum Shelf Life	Additional Conditions
Poultry		Refrigerated (0-4° C)	5 days	
		Frozen (-18° C)	12 months	
Beef/Lamb		Frozen (-18° C)	15 months	
		Refrigerated in vacuum or MAP (0-4° C)	10 days	Retail distribution
		Refrigerated in vacuum or MAP (0-4° C)	14 days	Wholesale distribution
		Refrigerated in vacuum or MAP (0-2° C)	45 days	Alternative 1
		Refrigerated in vacuum or MAP (-1-1° C)	85 days	Alternative 2
Fish	General	Refrigerated (0-4° C)	5 days	
	General	Frozen (-18° C)	12 months	
	Whole sea bream	Refrigerated (0-4° C)	7 days	
	Whole salmon	Refrigerated (0-4° C)	7 days	
	Whole sea bass	Refrigerated (0-4° C)	7 days	



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Additional conditions- shelf life limits of refrigerated beef/lamb

The producer of refrigerated beef/lamb can choose between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 when determining the product's shelf life. Labeling of the shelf life will be in accordance to the alternative chosen; two dates with a maximum shelf life of 45 days for Alternative 1 and three dates with a maximum shelf life of 85 days for Alternative 2.

Alternative 1 (the current situation as of 11/2017)

1. The beef/lamb will be stored in a vacuum or MAP packaging at a temperature between 0 °C and 2 °C.
2. The beef/lamb's maximum shelf life will be 45 days.
3. The meat will be labeled with two dates: the manufacture date (slaughter date) and the sell-by date.

Alternative 2

1. The beef/lamb will be stored in a vacuum or MAP packaging at a temperature between -1 °C and 1 °C.
2. The beef/lamb's maximum shelf life will be 85 days.
3. The meat will be labeled in the slaughterhouse with three dates: the manufacture date (slaughter date), the first marketing date and the sell-by date.
4. The first marketing date will be determined in advance by the producer/importer, and will not be later than the sell-by date.
5. The shelf life will be composed of two time periods:
 - a. "Shipping time": starting at the time of slaughter and including the shipment's travel time until its release from the port, cold storage, or slaughterhouse (for Israeli production), in vacuum or MAP at a temperature between -1 °C and 1 °C.
 - b. "Marketing time": the period of time from the product's release to the market until its sell-by date. The marketing time will be until 10, 14, or 35 days, in accordance with the type of distribution (the market temperature and whether it is marketed wholesale or retail):



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- i. Marketing time will be 10 days for the retail market when stored at a temperature between 0 ° C and 2 ° C.
 - ii. Marketing time will be 14 days for the wholesale market (the packaging will be opened in a food business such as a butcher or restaurant) when stored at a temperature between 0 ° C and 4 ° C.
 - iii. Marketing time will be 35 days for the wholesale market (the packaging will be opened in a food business such as a butcher or restaurant) when stored at a temperature between 0 ° C and 2 ° C.
6. The producer will determine in advance the first marketing date and the sell-by date in Israel according to paragraphs 3 and 4 above.
7. The meat will be released from cold storage where it has been stored since being imported not earlier than the first marketing date, which is printed on the label.
8. Israeli producers (domestic slaughter) can store their product under controlled conditions as part of the slaughterhouse's manufacturing process, and this period of time will be considered as the "shipping time".