



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government
Audit Report | 2023

Social Audit

**The Veterinary
Service in the Local
Authorities –
Supervision of Meat
and its Products**



The Veterinary Service in the Local Authorities – Supervision of Meat and its Products

Background

Food and nutrition directly impact public health, morbidity, and mortality. Food supervision ensures that the food consumed by the public is safe from microbiological and chemical risk factors. Food of animal origin is one of the most sensitive foods regarding the possible danger inherent to public health. It, therefore, requires supervision at a higher level than that required for other food products. Consuming food not suitable for human consumption can cause serious illness and even death. In recent years, several severe food poisoning cases have made headlines in Israel.

Supervision and control of meat and its products contribute to minimizing the chances of poisoning or illness caused by or transmitted through food. In March 2020, a reform in the supervision of food of animal origin entered into force (the Supervision of Food of Animal Origin Reform or the Reform). The Protection of Public Health (Food) Law, 2015 (the Public Health Law or the Law), enacted in 2015, replaced the Public Health (Food) Ordinance [New Version], 1983. The law regulates the food sector from the production stage through the import and up to the export and marketing stages to ensure the safety and quality of the food and protect public health. The supervision of sites selling meat to the public (butcher shops, marketing chains, neighborhood supermarkets, restaurants, hotels, event halls, institutions, etc.) is performed by the local authorities' veterinarians (the Authority Veterinarians) according to certification from the Director of the Veterinary Unit at the Ministry of Health. An Authority Veterinarian is a veterinarian employed by a local authority or by collaborations between local authorities (such as associations of cities and regional clusters), under the professional guidelines issued by the Director of the Veterinary Unit at the Ministry of Health.



Key Figures

3

residents in a Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs shelter that died in May 2022. According to the findings of a Ministry of Health sanitary check, abnormal level of bacteria was found in the meat served to the residents¹

1st place

in 2021, Israel led in average chicken consumption per capita – 4-fold the world average (about 65 kg, compared to about 15 kg); Average beef consumption per capita in Israel, about 23 kg, was one of the highest in the world – 1.5-fold the OECD average and 3.5-fold the world average

85,505 kg

meat and its products unfit for human consumption were destroyed by Authority Veterinarians in 2021

less than 10%

Authority Veterinarians checks in 2021 at sale sites of meat and its products (at 5,919 out of about 70,000 sites)

131,530

sale sites of meat and its products are registered in the Ministry of Health information system as of November 2022; however, a partial refinement of the data found that about 70,000 sales sites are registered in the system

173

local authorities did not report to the Ministry of Health on the inspections in the markets in June 2022 (about 67% of the local authorities)

33%

84 of the local authorities did not employ a veterinarian to supervise sale sites of meat and its products or employed an Authority Veterinarian who was not authorized to perform such supervision as of June 2022

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inspections were carried out by the **Taibeh** Municipality in 2020–2022 and by the **Kiryat Malachi** Municipality in 2020 and 2022 at the sale sites of meat and its products. In 2021, the **Kiryat Malachi** Municipality carried out only two inspections.

¹ In the hearing held at the Knesset's Health Committee from May 2022, medical officials from the Ministry of Health stated that it is not possible to determine unequivocally the cause of the three tenants' death.



Audit Actions

From June to November 2022, the State Comptroller's Office examined several aspects of the veterinary supervision of meat and its products in Israel; The supervision of the Authority Veterinarians in the sale sites of meat and its products; The Ministry of Health regulation of the Authority Veterinarians work; The certification of Authority Veterinarians and the staffing of veterinarian positions in the local authorities; The Ministry of Health information system established for monitoring food of animal origin; And notices to the public about the destruction of meat and its products that endanger public health. The audit was conducted at the Ministry of Health and six local authorities: the **Herzliya** Municipality, the **Taibeh** Municipality, the **Yavneh** Municipality, the **Yehud-Monosson** Municipality, the **Kiryat Malachi** Municipality and the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority, which receives veterinary services from the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services². Completion examinations were done at the Veterinary Supervision Corporation³. Moreover, the audit team accompanied a surprise audit conducted by a veterinarian from the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services at sale sites of meat and its products in the **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** Local Authority. The audit team also accompanied the inspections of the Authority Veterinarians of the **Herzliya** and **Yehud-Monosson** Municipalities.

Key Findings



International Review – Making Information Available to the Public – unlike New York City and Great Britain, where sanitary inspection results on food sales sites and the rating given to each site are published to the public, in Israel, no information is given to the public about the results of inspections conducted by Authority Veterinarians in the markets' and there is no rating of this type.

Performing Veterinary Inspections at Sites Selling Meat and its Products – the number of sales sites in the country that the Authority Veterinarians inspected in 2020–2021 and the first half of 2022 is less than one-tenth the number of sales sites

- 2 The Association was established in 1960 and provides veterinary services to 12 local authorities – Menashe, Alona, Pardes Hanna-Karkur, Jisr az-Zarqa, Binyamina-Givat Ada, Jatt, Baqa al-Gharbiyye, Fureidis, Zikhron Ya'akov, Ar'ara-'Ara, Harish and Or Akiva.
- 3 The Veterinary Supervision Corporation was established pursuant to Chapter VI of the Veterinary Surgeons Law, 1991, and began operating in March 2020. Its main purpose is to employ veterinary supervisors and supervising veterinarians for the supervision, according to the Law, of food of animal origin, as well as for additional veterinary supervision performed at the request of enterprises exporting food of animal origin.



that were included in the shortlist furnished by the Ministry of Health (for example, in 2021, 5,919 inspections were carried out at sites selling meat and its products, out of about 70,000 sites). In 2022, the **Taibeh** Municipality did not staff the position of Authority Veterinarian or perform any veterinary inspections in 2020–2022. The **Yavneh** Municipality carried out 27 inspections in 2021, even though the city had 72 selling sites of meat and its products, and did not perform inspections from June to October 2022. The **Kiryat Malachi** Municipality carried out only two inspections in 2021 and no inspections in 2020 and 2022; The Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services, which conducts veterinary inspections in the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority area, inspected only eight butcher shops, even though there are ten more restaurants within the Council's area; The **Yehud-Monosson** Municipality carried out 26 inspections in 2021, even though there were 56 sale sites of meat and its products within its area. Hence, within the jurisdictions of the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority and the **Yavneh** and **Yehud-Monosson** Municipalities, some sites were not inspected at all in 2021.

 **The Supervision of Authority Veterinarians in Institutions** – although the provisions of the Public Health Law state that the Authority Veterinarians must supervise sale sites of meat products in the local authorities (these sites are also referred to in the Law as "markets") and even though the Law broadly defines "sale" according to which it can be carried out in any way, for no payment or payment, including direct or indirect payment, the Ministry of Health did not distribute among the veterinarians in the local authorities instructions or procedures detailing the types of sites they must supervise, including reference to the supervision of institutions⁴. In 2020–2022, in all the examined authorities – the municipalities of Herzliya, Taibeh, **Yavneh**, **Yehud-Monosson**, and **Kiryat Malachi** and in the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority – the Authority Veterinarians did not inspect the institutions within the jurisdiction of these authorities. It was also found that the Ministry of Health did not verify whether the local authorities performed veterinary inspections in the institutions. The need to inspect the institutions is highlighted given cases of morbidity due to poor handling of food in institutions in recent years, where in one case, 33 residents fell ill, of which three died. In the discussion held by the Knesset's Health Committee, medical officials from the Ministry of Health stated that it is impossible to determine unequivocally what caused the death of the three tenants.

 **Veterinary Inspections on the Transport of Meat Products** – only about half a percent of the meat transports in 2021 were inspected by the Authority Veterinarians (3,136 inspections were carried out in transport vehicles, although there were 612,341 transports). In the municipalities of **Taibeh**, **Yavneh**, and **Kiryat Malachi** and the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority (through the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary

⁴ Institutions that operate kitchens where meat and its products are handled and where catering services are provided, such as health institutions, welfare institutions, boarding schools and nursing homes.



Services), no inspections of transport vehicles were carried out by the Authority Veterinarians during the period above.

👎 List of Sites Subject to Supervision of the Authority Veterinarian – in the municipalities of **Taibeh**, **Kiryat Malachi**, and the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority, the Authority Veterinarians did not have an organized list or mapping of the sites they were required to inspect. Furthermore, the Authority Veterinarians are not informed about the establishment of a new business for the sale of meat and its products within the jurisdiction of their local authority, included in the Ministry of Health information system, to begin supervising it.

👎 The Employment of Veterinarians in the Local Authorities and Their Certification – the Public Health Law, require the certification of the Authority Veterinarians by the Minister of Health and by the Director of the Veterinary Unit in the Ministry of Health. As of June 2022, 39 local authorities did not employ a veterinarian (15% of the authorities), and 45 local authorities employed a veterinarian who was not authorized to supervise sale sites of meat and its products (18% of the authorities) so that in 84 local authorities (33% of the authorities) there was no supervision of sites for the sale of meat and its products as required by the Law. At the beginning of October 2022, the certification given by the Minister of Health to 60 Authority Veterinarians expired, and at the end of September 2022, the certification issued by the Director of the Veterinary Unit to some of the Authority Veterinarians expired, including the certification of the **Herzliya** Municipality Veterinarian and two of the three veterinarians employed by the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services. At the end of November 2022, the Director of the Veterinary Unit authorized 122 Authority Veterinarians to perform veterinary inspections in markets, about two months after the previous authorization expired, including the **Herzliya** Municipality Veterinarian and a veterinarian from the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services.

👎 Determining the Required Number of Veterinarians in the Local Authorities and the Frequency of Inspections in the Markets – as of the audit completion, the Ministry of Health has not set the required number of certified veterinarians in the markets in all local authorities as required by the Public Health Law. Moreover, the Ministry of Health did not set a frequency for conducting inspections at the sales sites as required by Law. The audit raised variance between the examined local authorities in the scope of employment of an Authority Veterinarian, according to the number of selling sites of meat and its products in each authority. For example, a veterinarian position in the **Herzliya** Municipality is responsible for over twice as many sites for selling meat and its products as a veterinarian in **Yavneh** and **Kiryat Malachi**. The **Taibeh** and **Kiryat Malachi** Municipalities and the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority did not set a frequency for veterinary inspections at selling sites of meat and its products.

👎 Budget Allocation to the Local Authorities – the Veterinary Supervision Corporation allocates budget to the local authorities for veterinary inspection in the markets, according to the Ministry of Health reports it receives about the employment of



veterinarians certified for market inspection in the local authorities, and the ratio between the authority's population and the population of all authorities that employ a veterinarian certified by the Ministry of Health for market inspection ("Per Capita")⁵, even though the Public Health Law stipulates the payment according to the scope of position set for the local authority ("Per Job"). The Law states that the right to an allocation out of the inspection fees funds is granted if the local authority certifies a veterinarian for veterinary inspections in the markets. Nevertheless, the Veterinary Supervision Corporation allocates budgets to the municipalities of **Taibeh** (about NIS 165,000), **Yavneh** (about NIS 100,000), and **Yehud-Monosson** (about NIS 93,000) even when they did not have a certified veterinarian.



The Reports of the Authority Veterinarians on the Inspections Results – in June 2022, 173 of the local authorities (about 67% of the 257 authorities in the country at that time) did not report to the Ministry of Health on the execution of even one inspection, hence it is unclear whether the inspections were indeed carried out. The Authority Veterinarians of the **Herzliya**, **Yavneh**, and **Yehud-Monosson** Municipalities and the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services (which provides veterinary services to the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority) reported in the Ministry of Health's information system the results of the inspections they conducted at the sale sites of meat products. The **Kiryat Malachi** Municipality did not report the results of the two inspections carried out by the Authority Veterinarian in 2021 in the Ministry of Health's information system.



The Personal Safety of the Authority Veterinarians – Authority Veterinarians are exposed in the course of their work, on a daily level, to threats and physical and verbal abuse. For example, in August 2022, the Authority Veterinarian of the **Yehud-Monosson** Municipality was verbally attacked during an inspection she conducted at a restaurant in the city. In October 2021, during an inspection conducted by the Tel Aviv District Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health at a restaurant in **Herzliya**, the District Veterinarian was attacked. In December 2021, the veterinary department building in the **Beit Shemesh** Municipality was set on fire; And in January 2019, the Authority Veterinarian of the **Tamra** Municipality was shot in the leg. The Ministry of Health did not issue instructions to the local authorities and the Authority Veterinarians about the protection and personal safety of the Authority Veterinarians.



The Ministry of Health's Professional Guidelines and Control over the Authority Veterinarians Work – other than the instructions about publishing the destruction of meat and its products, the Veterinary Unit at the Ministry of Health did not publish professional guidelines for the activities of the Authority Veterinarians as required by Law. The Veterinary Unit does not supervise the reports submitted by the Authority Veterinarians to the Ministry of Health, does not manage and integrate findings arising from the market inspection reports submitted to it by the Authority Veterinarians for

⁵ A Latin term meaning: per person, per head. In this context: per resident.



analyzing their transverse and overall meaning, and does not check the nature of the Authority Veterinarians supervision on sale sites of meat and its products.



Administrative Enforcement Actions – the Public Health Law regulates administrative enforcement (financial sanction) on selling sites of meat and its products, violating its provisions. The financial sanction stipulated in the Public Health Law ranges from NIS 8,000 for an individual to NIS 40,000 for a corporation⁶. The Ministry of Health did not establish regulations for the initiation of administrative enforcement, did not form an enforcement policy procedure for violations of the provisions of the Law, and did not staff four positions assigned to its legal bureau for establishing an administrative enforcement and financial sanctions system. In practice, the Ministry of Health only imposes administrative fines⁷ on sites selling meat and its products of NIS 1,000 per violation.



Publishing the Destruction of Meat and its Products by the Ministry of Health – the Ministry of Health issued a directive according to which the public will be informed about the destruction of 50–100 kg of meat (unless the veterinarian requests that the matter is not published) and about the destruction of 100 kg or more, in any case. The Ministry of Health published on its website 21% of the instances of destruction of 50 kg or more of meat and its products between January and September 2022 (24 destructions out of 113 reported in the Ministry of Health information system). It was also found that the Ministry of Health did not publish the cases of destruction reported to it by the Authority Veterinarians in the examined authorities from January 2021 to September 2022: The Authority Veterinarians in the **Herzliya** Municipality said that they destroyed over 100 kg of meat and its products in three cases, in the **Yehud-Monosson** Municipality one report was made. In the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority, there was one report of the destruction of 65 kg. The municipalities of **Herzliya**, **Yehud-Monosson**, and the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority (in cooperation with the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services), where meat and its products were destroyed, did not inform their residents about the destruction and the sites where food of animal origin, unfit for human consumption, was found.



Procedure and Work Plan – the **Herzliya** Municipality formed a work procedure on "Supervision of food of animal origin," a work plan for inspecting sites selling meat and its products, and managed the execution of the inspections through an internal information system.

⁶ Section 260 of the Public Health Law. The amount of the sanction that can be imposed on a corporation depends on its annual sales turnover in the year preceding the fiscal year in which the violation was committed. If the turnover of a corporation is up to NIS 100 million, the basic amount is NIS 20,000. If the corporation's sales turnover is in excess of NIS 100 million, the basic amount is NIS 40,000.

⁷ According to the Administrative Offenses Regulations, Administrative Fine – Food Quality 1988.



Frequency of Inspections – the municipalities of **Herzliya, Yavneh, and Yehud-Monosson** have set a frequency for conducting inspections in the markets.

Key Recommendations

- 💡 The municipalities of **Taibeh, Yavneh, Yehud-Monosson, and Kiryat Malachi** and the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services (in cooperation with the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority) must carry out, through an Authority Veterinarian certified for market supervision, inspections of all types of sale sites of meat and its products whose inspection is required by law, including institutions where meat and its products are handled. The Ministry of Health should guide the local authorities and Authority Veterinarians about the need and importance of conducting veterinary inspections in institutions (such as health institutions, welfare institutions, boarding schools, and nursing homes) that operate kitchens where meat and its products are handled.
- 💡 The municipalities of **Taibeh** and **Kiryat Malachi** and the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority should map the sites where meat and its products are processed within their jurisdiction and prepare an updated list of all the sites, serving as a basis for the supervisory work of the Authority Veterinarian and for examining the completeness of the control performance at all the sites.
- 💡 The Ministry of Health should cooperate with the local authorities where there is no veterinarian to supervise sale sites of meat and its products or where a veterinarian who is not certified to perform said supervision works; Take care of the staffing of the position of the veterinarian and his certification, and if necessary certify a veterinarian from among the Veterinary Supervision Corporation employees to supervise the local authority's markets; Furthermore, the Ministry of Health should set a standard for the number of certified veterinarians required in the local authorities and the frequency of inspections to be done at the sales sites, as required by the Law; It is recommended that the Ministry of Health set the frequency of inspection needed for transport vehicles based on risk analysis and accordingly guide the local authorities.
- 💡 It is recommended that the municipalities of **Taibeh, Yavneh, Yehud-Monosson, and Kiryat Malachi** and the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services (in cooperation with the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority) prepare a work plan including the list of sites that sell meat and its products, the dates of the expected inspections throughout the year and the manpower and inputs required.
- 💡 The Ministry of Health should outline the transition from a "per capita" payment to financing the employment of the Authority Veterinarians certified to carry out veterinary supervision in the markets to a "per job" payment as required by the Law. It is recommended that the Ministry of Health and the Veterinary Supervision Corporation consider stipulating

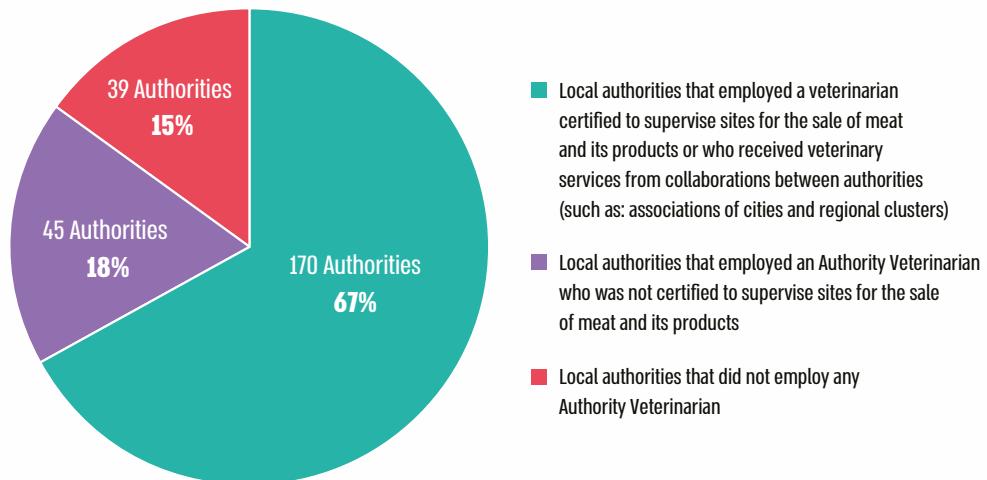


payments to authorities in which a certified veterinarian serves on the inspection operations at sites to sell meat and its products, but such inspections are not performed. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Health and the Veterinary Supervision Corporation consider demanding the return of funds transferred to local authorities for periods when no certified veterinarian was serving.

- 💡 The Ministry of Health is recommended to regulate the management and supervision procedures of the veterinary supervision system in the local authorities. It is also recommended that the information, findings, and deficiencies brought up by the Authority Veterinarians be managed and integrated so an orderly procedure for identifying transverse deficiencies can be carried out and lessons can be drawn. It is also recommended that the **Zikhron Ya'akov** Local Authority examine the overall veterinary inspection activities of the Samaria Cities Association Veterinary Services within its jurisdiction, verify their suitability for its needs, and ensure that it conducts inspections at all sale sites of meat and its products within its jurisdiction.
- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Health set regulations to impose financial sanctions as stipulated in the Law and establish an administrative enforcement system and financial sanctions against entities that violate the provisions of the Law.
- 💡 The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of National Security, and the local authorities should jointly mitigate the dangers the Authority Veterinarians who perform inspections at sale sites of meat and its products are exposed to and to secure Authority Veterinarians who are threatened during the performance of their duties.
- 💡 In cooperation with the local authorities, it is recommended that the Ministry of Health inspect all the sale sites of meat products registered in the information system and improve the data registered for a complete and reliable list.
- 💡 The Ministry of Health should inform the public about all meat destruction over 100 kg and meat destruction between 50 kg and 100 kg where there was no request from the Authority Veterinarian not to inform, according to the Ministry's procedure.
- 💡 It is recommended that the local authorities consider informing the public within their jurisdiction the detection of meat and its products that are unfit for human consumption.



Employment of Veterinarians in Local Authorities, June 2022



According to the data of the Veterinary Unit at the Ministry of Health, processed by the State Comptroller's Office. The data concerns 254 local authorities out of the 258 in Israel. It should be noted that the 258th local authority was established in June 2022.



Summary

Food and nutrition have a direct impact on public health. Food supervision ensures that the food consumed by the public is safe from microbiological and chemical risk factors. Meat and its products are the most sensitive types of food in the danger they may pose to public health. Poisoning as a result of poor handling of meat and its products can cause severe illness and even death.

The findings of the audit report raise significant deficiencies that may endanger public health or lead to serious harm to it: the Supervision of Food of Animal Origin Reform was only partially implemented, more than two years after the Reform fully entered into force; Deficiencies have arisen in the activities of the Ministry of Health, which is responsible for the supervision of meat and its products and is responsible for ensuring the health of the country's residents, and deficiencies have also arisen in the activities of the local authorities in carrying out veterinary supervision at sites for the sale of meat and its products within their jurisdictions.

Given the deficiencies in the veterinary supervision of meat and its products that endanger public health and the failure to fully comply with the provisions of the Law, the Ministry of Health and the local authorities should rectify the deficiencies raised in the report and ensure that the veterinary supervision by the local authorities will be carried out at all sites for the sale of meat and its products and in the scope to be set, including in institutions, some of which house the helpless. This is according to a risk assessment for the various types of sites and according to the Ministry of Health professional guidelines.

