

Regulations Governing the Processing of Alligators and the Sale of Alligator Meat and Parts

PURPOSE AND EFFECT: The purpose of this rule development effort is to allow legally acquired, CITES-tagged raw alligator hides to be cut into specified pieces by licensed alligator farmers, alligator meat processors, and alligator hide buyers. The effect will be to afford the alligator industry flexibility in utilizing portions of low-quality hides that would otherwise be undesirable in the marketplace.

SUMMARY: The proposed rule amendment would allow legally acquired, CITES-tagged raw alligator hides to be cut into specified pieces by licensed alligator farmers, alligator meat processors, and alligator hide buyers.

THE FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED RULE IS AS FOLLOWS:

68A-25.052 Regulations Governing the Processing of Alligators and the Sale of Alligator Meat and Parts.

(1) No change.

(2) Meat from alligators taken pursuant to Rule 68A-25.042, F.A.C., to which harvest tags have been affixed bearing the letters "MER" as part of the tag numbers may not be sold for human consumption and if not discarded ~~shall~~**must** be permanently and visibly labeled "NOT FOR SALE, Recommend: NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION."

(3) Alligator meat may only be sold if imported or if processed from carcasses skinned in a permitted alligator processing facility and processed and packaged in such a facility as provided in this section.

(4) No change.

(5) Provisions for the operation of alligator processing facilities:

(a) through (c) No change.

(d) Meat processed or re-processed for sale ~~shall~~**must** be packaged in a sealed, tamper-proof package (a package that ~~is~~**must be** permanently and noticeably altered if opened to remove or add meat). Each package ~~shall~~**must** be permanently labeled to indicate the name of the processor processing the alligator(s), the CITES tag number(s) from the alligator(s) from which the meat was taken, the date packaged, and the number of pounds of meat enclosed. Each package and label shall be used to package meat only one time.

(6) No change.

(7) Provisions for the importation of alligator meat to Florida:

(a) Meat ~~shall~~**must** be acquired and processed in accordance with the applicable health and sanitation requirements and laws of the state of origin.

(b) and (c) No change.

(8) Provisions for cutting raw alligator hides into pieces:

(a) Only the following persons who possess legally-acquired, untanned alligator hides with CITES tags affixed may cut those hides into pieces:

1. Persons licensed pursuant to section 379.3751, F.S., as alligator farmers and their licensed alligator farming agents;

2. Persons licensed pursuant to section 379.3751, F.S., as alligator meat processors and their employees; and

3. Persons licensed pursuant to section 379.364, F.S., as alligator hide buyers and their employees.

(b) Whole hides may be cut into a maximum of four (4) pieces for further processing.

1. For hides resulting from belly-skinned alligators (i.e., whole hides that have the belly portion intact), the hide may be cut into either two (2) flanks or chaleco, as well as belly, and tail, hereinafter referred to as "hide piece(s)." All remaining portions of the originating hide shall be destroyed.

2. For hides resulting from hornback-skinned alligators (i.e., whole hides that have been cut through the middle of the belly portion), the hide may be cut into either two (2) flanks (each including a portion of the belly) or chaleco, as well as tail, and back, hereinafter referred to as "hide piece(s)." All remaining portions of the originating hide shall be destroyed.

(c) For alligator hide pieces that are not intended for exporting from the United States, the following shall apply.

1. The licensed alligator farmer, alligator meat processor, or alligator hide buyer shall provide the Commission with at least a 48-hour notice of intent to cut a CITES-tagged hide(s) into pieces indicating the date when the hide(s) will be cut. The hide cutting process may occur for up to two (2) days under the notice of intent. Any additional days needed to complete the hide

cutting process shall proceed only after obtaining prior written approval from the Commission.

2. Only tamperproof tags approved by the Commission and supplied by the licensed alligator farmer, alligator meat processor, or alligator hide buyer for affixing to hide pieces may be used for tagging hide pieces, with each such tag bearing the name of the licensed alligator farmer, alligator meat processor, or alligator hide buyer, a unique, non-repeating serial number, and the word "Florida" or the letters "FL".

3. Each hide piece, once cut, shall immediately have affixed thereto a tag as prescribed in subparagraph 8(c)2., above, and the tag's serial number recorded in association with the originating hide's CITES tag number and the type of hide piece cut (flank, belly, tail, back, or chaleco). Each chaleco hide piece shall have a Commission-approved tamperproof tag affixed on each flank. Each tail hide piece shall retain affixed thereto the CITES tag of the originating hide. A CITES tag or Commission-approved tamperproof tag shall remain affixed to the hide piece until the hide piece is destroyed, tanned, taxidermy mounted, or exported from the state.

4. All documentation required by subparagraph 8(c)3., above, shall be provided to the Commission within seven (7) days of completion of the hide cutting process.

(d) For alligator hide pieces that are intended for exporting from the United States, the following shall apply.

1. The licensed alligator farmer, alligator meat processor, or alligator hide buyer shall provide the Commission with at least a 14-day notice of intent to cut a CITES-tagged hide(s) into pieces indicating the date when the hide(s) will be cut and the number of pieces the hide(s) will be cut. The hide cutting process may occur for up to two (2) days under the notice of intent. Any additional days needed to complete the hide cutting process shall proceed only after obtaining prior written approval from the Commission.

2. The Commission shall issue the licensed alligator farmer, alligator meat processor, or alligator hide buyer the corresponding number of CITES tags equal to the number of hide pieces indicated on the notice of intent.

3. Each hide piece, once cut, shall immediately have affixed thereto a CITES tag provided pursuant to subparagraph 8(d)2., above, and the tag's serial number recorded in association with the originating hide's CITES tag number and the type of hide piece cut (flank, belly, tail, back, or chaleco). Each chaleco hide piece shall have a Commission-issued CITES tag affixed on each flank. A CITES tag shall remain affixed to the hide piece until the hide piece is destroyed, tanned, taxidermy mounted, or exported from the state.

The Commission-provided CITES tag shall remain affixed to the hide piece until the hide piece is tanned, taxidermy mounted, or exported from the state.

4. All documentation in compliance with subparagraph 8(d)3., above, shall be provided to the Commission within seven (7) days of completion of the hide cutting process along with any issued CITES tags that were not used.

5. Each tail or back hide piece shall be packaged as follows:

a. Packed in a transparent, sealed container.

b. Each container must be clearly marked with a non-reusable parts tag or label that includes all of the following information: a description of the contents, the total weight (contents and container), the number of the CITES tag from the originating hide and the US-CITES logo, the letters "FL", a unique serial number, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species code "MIS."

(e) Written records of the number, source, and disposition of all alligator hide pieces produced under this Rule that are retained, bought, sold, received, or transferred by licensed alligator farmers, alligator meat processors, or alligator hide buyers shall be maintained for a period of one year.

(98) The feet, viscera or skeletal parts of lawfully acquired alligators may be retained or transferred provided that all transfers, with the exception of retail sales to the consumer, shall be documented in writing to indicate the kind and quantity of items and date transferred and the name and address of each recipient, and such records shall be maintained for a period of one year.

(109) Manufactured goods wholly or partly composed of alligator hide, organs, teeth, or skull, or other skeletal material may only be sold in accordance with provisions of Rule 68A-25.002, F.A.C.

(114) These requirements shall not be construed to supersede the regulatory authority of any federal, state or local entity regarding the processing or handling of food products, but shall be deemed supplemental thereto. Alligators processed hereunder shall be handled and processed in compliance with all applicable sanitation and permit requirements of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the county health department of the county in which the facility is located, and any other federal, state, or local authorities.

PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE: As soon as possible after approval by the Commission.

Rulemaking Authority Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. Law Implemented Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const., 379.3012, 379.3751 FS. History—New 5-5-88, Amended 2-14-89, 4-11-90, 4-1-96, 9-15-96, 6-1-97, 4-12-98, 4-15-99, Formerly 39-25.052, Amended 4-30-00, 3-30-06,_____.