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**Contact:** Shelton Dodson  
Director of Public Affairs, New Mexico Department of Agriculture  
[sdodson@nmda.nmsu.edu](mailto:sdodson@nmda.nmsu.edu)  
Office: 575-646-2804  
Cell: 575-339-5011

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**Passage of Meat Inspection Act will grant new authority to New Mexico Livestock Board**

*New Mexico's rural communities to benefit from state-led inspection process*

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SANTA FE, N.M. – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is set to review a bipartisan-sponsored bill granting the New Mexico Livestock Board (NMLB) authority over meat and poultry inspections in the state. Inspections conducted and certifications issued by NMLB would be equivalent to or greater than those given by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Senate Bill 37 (SB 37), known as The Meat Inspection Act, received unanimous support Feb. 13 from the New Mexico House of Representatives after receiving unanimous approval from the state Senate. The bill calls for the establishment of a comprehensive state meat and poultry inspection program administered through NMLB.

“This legislation plays a critical role in providing value-added agriculture opportunities in New Mexico and fresh local beef to our consumers across New Mexico,” said New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte. “This continues Gov. Lujan Grisham’s commitment to increasing opportunities in value-added agriculture across New Mexico. I look forward to these opportunities in the future.”

“The NMLB is very excited to be an integral part of potential agricultural and economic growth for the state of New Mexico,” said NMLB Executive Director Belinda Garland. “This agency proudly supports the livestock industry, and this is just one more service we will be able to provide to producers throughout the state.”

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture’s (NMDA) analysis of SB 37 suggests that new statutory authority over a state-level meat and poultry inspection program would enhance local meat industries and have a positive effect on the state’s economy. Such a program would have the following positive impacts:

- improves food safety;
- enables timely inspections of livestock processed in-state;
- increases the statewide efficiency of inspections and ensure access to inspectors conveniently located throughout the state;
- gives grocery retailers and food service distributors a wider variety of local meat purchasing options and;
- provides access to locally-grown and processed food to schools, senior centers, food banks, etc.;
- benefits small to mid-size producers interested in direct sales for public consumption.

Inspectors with USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) currently handling meat inspections in New Mexico only conduct a limited number of inspections annually, which leads many of the state's ranchers to ship livestock out-of-state for processing. Doing so results in extra costs to producers and higher prices for consumers.

Once the state-level program is certified by FSIS and fully operational, all meat and poultry certified by state inspectors and processed in-state will be sold in New Mexico, therefore enabling New Mexico's rural ranchers to work directly with New Mexico's supermarkets, restaurants and institutional buyers to bring high-quality, certified meat and poultry to consumers at lower costs.

Currently, 29 states have their own meat and/or poultry inspection programs which must be certified by FSIS and meet or exceed the standards and requirements of the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Federal Poultry Products Inspection Act and the Federal Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978.

"We are humbled by the overwhelming bipartisan support received during the 2024 legislative session," said Garland. "The NMLB wants to thank Governor Lujan Grisham for allowing SB 37 to be presented, all the state senators and representatives who supported and voted unanimously in favor of the bill, and all the organizations and individuals who stood by us through many long hours to see it sent for final passage. This is truly legislation that will benefit all the people."

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is set to review a bipartisan-sponsored bill granting the New Mexico Livestock Board authority over meat and poultry inspections in the state. (Photo credit: Preston Keres / U.S. Department of Agriculture)