

### **03G - Fully Cooked-Not Shelf Stable (RTE)**

This processing category includes all meat and poultry products that have been fully cooked, but are not shelf stable. Fully cooked means that these products have been sufficiently cooked so that they are safe to eat as they are, with no further preparation required by the consumer. This is also known as “ready-to-eat.” Please note, however, that many of these products are customarily eaten hot, and cooking instructions may be included on the label. This does not affect the classification of these products into this processing category. An example is the hot dog. This product receives sufficient heat treatment to be fully cooked, and does not necessarily need to be reheated by the consumer. Most consumers do, however, heat this product, and cooking instructions may be included on the label of the product. Another parameter that defines this category is that the products are not shelf stable. Shelf stable means that the product has received a treatment that renders it safe to store without refrigeration. This does not apply to this category. These products, although fully cooked, are not shelf stable, and must be kept refrigerated or frozen in order to maintain safety and quality. Again, the hot dog is a great example. It must be kept refrigerated by the consumer until it is eaten.

The finished products in this category are not shelf stable products and require special handling to maintain their wholesome condition, i.e., labeling that states the product must be kept refrigerated or kept frozen (9 CFR §317.2(k) or §381.125(a)). Some frozen RTE products produced in this processing category require reheating for palatability. These frozen products are still safe to eat without this further preparation by the consumer and are therefore still considered RTE. Some examples of finished products produced under this process category that may fall under the ISP 03G Element include: fully cooked hams, cooked beef, roast beef, pastrami, corned beef, hot dogs, meat loaves, meat and poultry salads, sliced luncheon meats, baked chicken, frozen entrees, and poultry rolls. These finished products are labeled in a manner that identifies them as RTE by the consumer. Product standards, processing methods, and labeling are all factors that must be considered in determining the regulatory processing category for 03G RTE products.