



Sarah Huckabee Sanders  
Governor

# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205  
agriculture.arkansas.gov  
(501) 225-1598



Wes Ward  
Secretary of Agriculture

[Arkansas Department of Agriculture](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 11/17/2023**

Contact: Ayden Massey, (501) 813-6012

[ayden.massey@agriculture.arkansas.gov](mailto:ayden.massey@agriculture.arkansas.gov)

## Williams Baptist University Announced as Fourth State-Inspected Meat Facility

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) is pleased to announce that Williams Baptist University in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas is the fourth meat processing facility licensed by the Arkansas Meat Inspection Program. The facility joins Arkansas State University, JACO Meats, and Ferguson’s Packing Company as state-inspected meat processing facilities.



Governor Sanders designated November 16 as the Walnut Ridge Capital for a Day and toured the facility with Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward, Arkansas Secretary of Energy and Environment Shane Khoury, Arkansas Chief Workforce Officer Mike Rogers, as well as several local government, business, and university leaders.

“The expansion of state-inspection facilities across the state is great news for Arkansas consumers and the state’s agriculture industry,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward. “We are hopeful that this program will continue to increase the availability of locally sourced meat and meat products for Arkansans.”

The Arkansas Meat Inspection Program was authorized by Act 418 during the 2021 Regular Session of the Arkansas General Assembly and was finalized through a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The program allows the Department to inspect meat products for shipment within Arkansas.

Arkansas is one of 28 states participating in FSIS’s State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs. These programs allow state inspectors to ensure program enforcement and regulatory compliance in small establishments operating within the state. The MPI programs must develop, administer, and enforce requirements “at least equal to” those set forth in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA).

The need for additional meat processing capacity was highlighted by food supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Department worked with the Arkansas legislature and industry stakeholders to receive and distribute \$10.4 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for the Arkansas Meat and Poultry Processing Grant Program. Williams Baptist University received funding through the Arkansas Meat and Poultry Processing Grant Program in 2020.

For more information on program requirements or to apply, visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-meat-inspection-program/](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-meat-inspection-program/).

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while conserving natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/](http://agriculture.arkansas.gov/). The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.