

## STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH RISK-BASED INSPECTION

FSIS has seen tremendous improvements in the safety of meat, poultry and egg products. The best indicators of this progress are those that directly relate to pathogen reduction and public health outcomes.

Since 2000, the percentage of regulatory samples of meat and poultry products that tested positive for *Listeria monocytogenes* has fallen by 67 percent. In 2006, 0.51 percent of product samples were positive for this dangerous pathogen. This is made even more remarkable as FSIS has recently focused its efforts on the products that present the greatest public health risk.

Positive samples for *E. coli* O157:H7 in raw ground beef have declined by 80 percent since 2000. For example, of more than 11,000 raw ground beef samples taken in 2006, 0.17 percent tested positive for *E. coli* O157:H7.

There are also dramatic declines in the rate of human illness from pathogens commonly associated with foodborne illness. Using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) most recent statistics and comparing human foodborne illness data from 2005 with 1998 data, *E. coli* O157:H7 human foodborne illness rates are down 29 percent, and illnesses from *Listeria monocytogenes* are down 32 percent.

However, we must continue to strengthen public health and prepare for future threats using sound science, before those threats can harm or even kill consumers. Current estimates by the CDC indicate that approximately 5,000 people die of food borne illness every year. FSIS is seeking to enhance its risk-based inspection system (RBI) for processing establishments to give FSIS the ability to anticipate and quickly respond to food safety challenges before they affect public health.

FSIS is developing measures to track the effect RBI will have on improving public health. These measures will include:

- CDC measures of foodborne illness rates,
- FSIS product sampling and environmental sampling rates,
- Verified consumer food safety complaints,
- Product recalls; and
- Score plants earn on their ability to control risk.

The process of evolving to risk-based inspection is dynamic and ongoing. FSIS continues to utilize state-of-the-art data collection techniques and analysis, including attribution data to link foodborne illness with inspected product, to help guarantee to the American public that its meat and poultry products are being more effectively inspected.