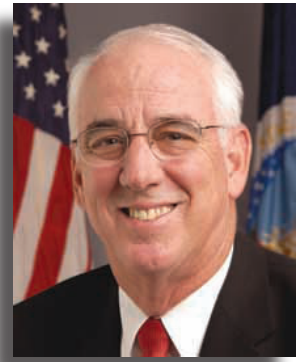


under secretary USDA



Protecting Public Health With Risk-Based Inspection

Protecting public health is not only more than a nine-to-five job, it's also about constantly re-evaluating and improving our systems to ensure the lowest probable risks to the public. The Office of Food Safety and FSIS are moving forward to update our inspection system to assure the public that the meat, poultry and egg products they buy — in a store or restaurant — have the lowest risk possible from deadly bacteria or other contaminants.

We use a risk-based approach, taking action on the highest risk procedures or products that are more likely to jeopardize public health. We need to enhance our system to give ourselves the ability to anticipate and quickly respond to food safety challenges before they negatively affect consumers. We don't want to wait for something to happen. We need to work proactively. With continued input from our employees and consumer and industry partners, we are making this system even more robust. Let me provide an illustration of where we are heading.

Our inspector must visit three food processing plants in one day. First, the inspector stops at Plant A, which produces ground poultry products. By their nature, these products have a higher risk than other products for carrying harmful bacteria. This is especially true if the establishment has a poor record on cleanliness. Plant A has been warned that it will lose its grant of inspection unless it shapes up.

Next, our inspector goes to Plant B, which also produces ground poultry. However, this plant is practically spic-and-

span. From top management to line employees, it's evident that everyone is dedicated to safety. We have had relatively few issues with this plant over the years.

Finally, our inspector visits Plant C, which has an equally clean record as Plant B. Not only that, it produces a much lower-risk product than ground poultry — cooked, canned hams.

Our current system is set up where our inspector spends roughly an equal amount of time at each plant, every day, regardless of the level of risk each one presents to public health. It makes better sense for our inspector to spend more time in the highest risk plant with the highest risk product, as determined by science-based data and public input.

Of course we're still going to inspect each plant daily, but within any given day, some plants will need a closer, longer look than others. We're working to make that happen.

Our efforts are not about decreasing the size of our inspection force and are not about saving money — neither happens under this plan. It *is* about improving the safety of the meat and poultry products we have responsibility for. It's about spending the time we do have in a smarter way — more time in plants that need us the most. Ultimately, it's about lowering the risk to public health.

RICHARD A. RAYMOND, M.D.
Under Secretary
Office of Food Safety

U.S. Department of Agriculture

MIKE JOHANNIS Secretary
CHARLES F. CONNER Deputy Secretary

Office of Food Safety

DR. RICHARD A. RAYMOND Under Secretary
DR. CURT J. MANN Deputy Under Secretary

Food Safety and Inspection Service

DR. DAVID P. GOLDMAN Acting Administrator
BRYCE QUICK Deputy Administrator

Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach

TERRI NINTEMANN Assistant Administrator
ROBERT B. TYNAN Deputy Assistant Administrator

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 1-800-795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.