

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

Update on the Technical Service Center

Purpose

This briefing paper is provided to update the Committee on the status of its recommendations regarding how the Technical Service Center (TSC) can provide enhanced technical assistance to establishments and other constituent groups.

Background

The TSC was established in 1997. Its role has evolved from managing a hotline directly supporting inspectors implementing the Pathogen Reduction Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Systems (PR/HACCP) rule to providing technical expertise, data analysis and correlation to diverse constituencies. Clients include inspection personnel, industry, states and other interested parties.

Discussion

Incorporating recommendations from the Committee, the TSC is making progress on improving its function and service. To meet this goal, we are focusing on:

- developing and disseminating additional Q&As and related materials on FSIS technical issues:
 - generating new Q&As, based on a review of telephone and email questions coming into the TSC, and posting them to a Q&A page on the FSIS web site. Trend data are sent to the Center for Learning to update training and Interactive Knowledge Exchanges (IKEs) as necessary to support understanding of policy information;
 - developing an IKE Scenario Comment page, which will present newly developed IKE scenarios before they are distributed to inspection personnel. Scenarios will be posted for a period of 5 working days to enable inspection personnel, industry, consumers, and others to review and comment. After the comment period is over, comments will be reviewed by the TSC staff, and changes will be made, as appropriate, to the IKE;
 - establishing management controls for consistency of email answers and for reviewing/updating archived Q&As;
 - planning methods for participation in the Agency's monthly industry meetings; and;
 - enhancing the FSIS web site to include additional technical resources for our customers. For example, we recently added technical guidance for slaughter and processing establishments affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita;

- capturing feedback on TSC service:
 - developing, with assistance from the Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement and Review (OPEER), a survey of district office personnel, including frontline supervisors, inspectors and Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAOs), and
 - obtaining information from on-going listening/outreach sessions as well as Agency Town Hall Meetings that is being analyzed to make improvements in TSC service.
 - Agency Internal Communication Board recommendations regarding TSC being evaluated to improve TSC service.
 - requesting that OPEER perform an evaluation of the TSC that would include obtaining feedback from field personnel. We are currently coordinating timetables and other aspects of this project.

- compiling and posting helpful information for inspection personnel in the FSIS Intranet Resource Center. Currently, we are training the TSC editor and reviewer to update information on the intranet, and developing a clearance process for TSC PowerPoint presentations

- conducting more correlations when there is noncompliance:
 - including headquarters policy staff in the TSC's weekly meetings,
 - available for district correlation session on-site or by conference call,
 - hosting national correlation meetings for district analysts and public health veterinarians,
 - meeting quarterly with Office of Field Operations headquarters on technical issues, and
 - playing an integral part in the Agency's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and serving as a technical contact for field personnel on food security issues.

In addition to conducting correlation sessions when there are compliance issues, the TSC is proactively interacting with field personnel, headquarters staff and constituents to continually improve the service provided.

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