

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 program 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:
 - Implemented Q&A section on the FSIS website. Q&As are based on a review of telephone and email questions received by the TSC. 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.
 - Implemented an IKE Scenario Comment page, which presents newly developed IKE scenarios before they are distributed to inspection program personnel. Scenarios are posted for a period of five working days to enable inspection program personnel, industry, consumers, and others to review and comment. (After the comment period is over, comments are reviewed by the TSC staff, and changes will be made, as appropriate, to the IKE.)
 - Established and implemented management controls for consistency of email answers and for reviewing/updating archived Q&A.
 - Currently participating in the Agency's monthly industry meetings.
 - Implemented a call management system to collect questions and answers and other caller data to identify common questions coming into the TSC. This information can be used to post additional information on the FSIS website and identify policy clarification and training needs.

- Capturing feedback on TSC service:
 - Currently, the Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement and Review (OPEER), with the cooperation of the TSC, is conducting an evaluation of TSC operations and customer service. Sources of information for the evaluation include: a survey of district office personnel, including frontline supervisors, inspectors and Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAOs); a survey of TSC employees; and a *Federal Register* Notice requesting public comments on TSC services. At the conclusion of the evaluation OPEER will issue its findings, as well as recommendations for enhancing TSC customer service.
- Compiling and posting helpful information for inspection personnel in the FSIS Intranet Resource Center. This action item is ongoing.
- Conducting more correlations when there is noncompliance:
 - Including headquarters policy staff in TSC's weekly meetings;
 - Availability for district correlation sessions 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.

All correlation actions are ongoing.

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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