



Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

New Safeguards to Protect Consumers from Foodborne Illness Announced

FSIS announced this week a series of prevention-based policy measures that will better protect consumers from foodborne illness in meat and poultry products. These measures will significantly improve the ability to trace contaminated food materials in the supply chain, to act against contaminated products sooner and to establish the effectiveness of food safety systems.

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The measures include:

- A proposal to implement new traceback measures in order to control pathogens earlier and prevent them from triggering foodborne illnesses and outbreaks. To review the proposed change in traceback policy, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Federal_Register_Notices/index.asp.
- The implementation of three provisions included in the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill). The new regulations, published as a Final Rule and directed by Congress, require establishments to prepare and maintain recall procedures, to notify FSIS within 24 hours that a meat or poultry product that could harm consumers has been shipped into commerce, and to document each reassessment of their Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system food safety plans. Learn more about the Farm Bill provisions at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Interim_&_Final_Rules/index.asp.
- The availability of guidance to plants on the steps that are necessary to establish that a plant's HACCP food safety systems will work as designed to control the food safety

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Export Requirement Updates



The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following countries:

Canada
Colombia
Japan
Mexico
Russia
Singapore

Complete information can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

FSIS Constituent Update is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office.

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and Consumer Education**

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...USDA to Improve Residue Compliance

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hazards that they confront. This process, called "validation," enables companies to ensure that their food safety systems are effective in preventing foodborne illness. This notice announces that the draft guidance document is available for comment. Learn more about the HACCP validation draft guidance at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Federal_Register_Notices/index.asp.

FSIS Posts Prevalence Report to its Website

In the FSIS Strategic Data Analysis Plan for Domestic Inspection (www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/NACMPI/Sep2010/2010_Strategic_Data_Analysis_Plan.pdf), posted September of 2010, the agency made a commitment to evaluate its routine verification programs for estimating prevalence. This evaluation will allow FSIS to better understand how contamination rates change over time, develop new policies and interventions to reduce contamination and measure the agency's performance toward meeting strategic planning goals.

Historically, traditional microbiological baseline studies were used to derive estimates of pathogen prevalence in FSIS-regulated products. However, baseline studies are usually targeted at a specific commodity-pathogen pair and are not repeated annually.

To address this, FSIS conducted an evaluation of the agency's current pathogen verification testing programs to determine if they provide suitable data to estimate pathogen prevalence in regulated products. The three pathogens of interest were *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7, *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*), and *Salmonella* in Ready-To-Eat (RTE) products, consistent with FSIS' current major verification testing programs.

The findings of the evaluation, posted on the FSIS website (www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Prevalence_Estimates_Report.pdf) this week, indicate that, given the current way the FSIS Pathogen Verification Sampling Programs are constructed, it is only possible to utilize the existing *E. coli* O157:H7 pathogen verification testing program in raw ground beef to estimate the national prevalence. It is not possible to estimate prevalence for *E. coli* O157:H7 in beef trim and components, *Salmonella* in any raw products or *Lm* and/or *Salmonella* in RTE products. FSIS is currently looking at potential revisions to its pathogen verification testing programs in light of this evaluation and will post a report for public comment on the FSIS website when those revisions are complete.

PHIS Import Inspection Component Scheduled to Launch in Late May

FSIS is preparing to implement the import component of the Public Health Information System (PHIS) on May 29. All FSIS import regions are scheduled to begin using PHIS on this date.

In preparation, letters were distributed to foreign governments on March 20 and importers and brokers on April 18 that provided information on changes to certification requirements, product categorization and presentation for import reinspection and sampling at official import inspection establishments.

Import establishments should have received a letter with this information this week. The letters are posted online at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/PHIS_Import_Component/index.asp and also linked to the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS/index.asp. Look to future issues of the *Constituent Update* and check the website for more information.

Understanding the Role of State Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs

State meat and poultry inspection (MPI) programs are an important part of the nation's food safety system. They work in cooperation with FSIS and verify that meat and poultry products produced and sold within their state are safe, wholesome, properly labeled.

Under a cooperative agreement with FSIS, these programs allow states to operate their own meat and poultry inspection programs as long as they impose mandatory inspection and sanitation requirements that are "at least equal to" those in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), Humane Methods of Slaughter Act and the regulations that FSIS has created to carry out these laws.

Products produced under these programs cannot cross state lines and can only be shipped or sold within that state. There are currently 27 state MPI programs that employ approximately 1,400 state personnel to inspect approximately 1,700 small and very small establishments, as defined by the Small Business Administration.

To ensure that the 27 states are providing inspection "at least equal to" the federal program, FSIS, led by the OPEER's Federal State Audit Branch, conducts annual reviews of state self-assessments and on-site reviews of state programs every 3 years. These programs are then eligible to receive federal reimbursements of up to 50 percent of their inspection costs, totaling approximately \$50 million annually for the 27 eligible states.

OOEET's Outreach and Partnership Division provides guidance to state programs regarding documentation of the cooperative agreements, training for state inspection personnel and other state concerns.

Did You Know?

State inspected establishments produce a wide variety of products in small or very small establishments. Some State MPI programs may provide inspection to additional species that are not amenable to the FMIA or PPIA such as buffalo, elk, or deer, which would require reimbursement under federal inspection. For these non-amenable species, the State covers 100 percent of the inspection costs.

**NACMCF
Subcommittee to
Hold Public Meetings**

The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods, Subcommittee on Control Strategies for Reducing Foodborne Norovirus Infections will meet May 8 -10, to discuss improving control of the transmission of foodborne Human Noroviruses (HuNoV).

The group will consider HuNoV incidence of infection, attribution in foods and detection methodology, as well as the most effective control practices and interventions.

The meetings will take place Tuesday, May 8, through Thursday, May 10, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Patriots Plaza III, Rm. 9-131, 355 E St., S.W., Washington D.C. 20024. Due to increased security measures, all persons wishing to attend must RSVP in advance. To register, contact Karen Thomas-Sharp at (202) 690-6620 or karen.thomas-sharp@fsis.usda.gov.

Revalidation Means More Time Before Equine Slaughter Restarts

Currently there are no facilities approved for horse slaughter in the United States.

Following a decision by Congress in November 2011 to lift the ban on horse slaughter, one establishment, located in New Mexico, recently applied for a grant of inspection exclusively for equine and USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is reviewing the application.

However, given that the agency last conducted a horse inspection six years ago, FSIS has determined that despite the congressional decision to lift the ban, the agency will require a significant amount of time to update its testing and inspection processes and methods before it is fully able to develop a future inspection regimen.

Comment Period was Extended for Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection Proposed Rule

FSIS extended the comment period 30 days for a proposed rule to modernize the way young chickens and turkeys are inspected. Comments are now due by May 29. The request to extend the comment period was made by constituents, and the agency agreed.

The notice (www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Proposed_Rules/index.asp) clarifies answers to questions from several groups; the posting of those answers ensures that the groups and the public have access to the same information. The notice also specifies that FSIS is seeking information and data on potential impacts of line speed on worker safety.

Comments may be submitted through the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal at www.regulations.gov, or by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), FSIS, Docket Clerk, Patriots Plaza III, 355 E St., S.W., 8-163A, Mailstop 3782, Washington, DC 20250-3700. All items submitted by mail or electronic mail must include docket number FSIS 2011-0012.

Webinar Available for Generic Labeling Approval Processes

FSIS will hold a webinar on generic labeling regulations on May 22 at 2 p.m. ET.

The webinar is intended to provide guidance on the types of labeling and modifications to previously approved labels that are generically approved by FSIS.

To access the webinar, go to <https://connect16.uc.att.com/usda/meet/?ExEventID=85277207>

Updates on FSIS Testing for *E. coli*

Weekly updates for the agency's raw beef *E. coli* sampling program are posted to the FSIS website.

For comparative previous and current year results, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.coli_Testing_Results/index.asp.

Get Answers at AskFSIS

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, *AskFSIS* offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As. To view recently posted topics, visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/>.

HACCP Categorization of NRTE Products That Receive a Full Lethality Treatment at the Establishment

http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1771

Raw Beef Products Sampled Under MT43S

http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1773

Sampling Ceilings and Other Hard-to-Reach Areas Using a Swabbing Pole During RLM or IVT Sampling

http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1772

FSIS Policy Updates

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following policy updates were recently issued:

Notice 29-12, *FSIS Verification Testing for Non O157 Shiga Toxin Producing E. coli (Non O157 STEC) Under MT60, MT52 and MT53 Sampling Programs*

Notice 30-12, *FSIS Verification Testing for Non O157 Shiga Toxin Producing E. coli (Non O157 STEC) in Imported Product Under the MT51 Sampling Program*

All notices and directives are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.asp.