

# Small Plant NEWS

Vol. 5, No. 4

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## Small Plant NEWS

**Editor:** Keith Payne

**Managing Editor:** Jane Johnson, DVM

**Production:** Joan Lindenberger,  
Sally Fernandez

**Design:** Gordon Wilson, Duane Robinson

**Contact:** *Small Plant News*, USDA/FSIS,  
Patriots Plaza III, Rm. 9-267A, Mailstop 3778,  
1400 Independence Ave., SW,  
Washington, DC 20250. (800) 336-3747  
E-mail: [SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov)

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## Harvesting Wild Game

By Denise Amann, DVM



**H**olidays throughout the year are a time for families to gather and feast, and if there is a hunter in the family, wild game might be served as the main entrée.

“Wild game” are wild land mammals (including those living within an enclosed area under conditions of freedom), which are hunted, and wild birds. Large native game animals in the United States include antelope, buffalo, bear, caribou, deer, elk, moose, and reindeer. In culinary terms, “venison” can be meat from deer, elk, moose, caribou, antelope, and pronghorn. Game birds include wild turkeys, wild geese, wild ducks, grouse, quail, pheasant, and other non-domesticated species of fowl.

Most wild game is not amenable to mandatory FSIS inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) and, therefore, products made entirely from wild game are not “meat” or “poultry” under those laws.

Even so, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) does provide, upon request, voluntary inspection of certain wild game species on a fee-for-service basis. Species of wild land mammals eligible for voluntary inspection are defined as “exotic animals” (9 CFR Part 352) and include reindeer, elk, deer, antelope, water buffalo, or bison. Species of wild

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birds eligible for voluntary inspection include any migratory water fowl or non-domesticated game bird (9 CFR Part 362).



FSIS has the authority to provide voluntary inspection of these species under the Agricultural Marketing Act. Voluntary inspection includes inspection of each animal and verification by FSIS inspectors that products are produced in a sanitary manner. “Exotic animals” inspected and passed under voluntary FSIS inspection receive a triangular USDA mark of inspection.

Products from animals not amenable to the FMIA and PPIA, including those inspected and passed under voluntary FSIS inspection, are subject to Federal regulation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as “food” under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

Processed products that include both wild game and amenable meat or poultry may be subject to mandatory FSIS inspection. Processed products generally are amenable to mandatory inspection if they contain as little as 3 percent raw or 2 percent cooked meat from an amenable animal, together with other safe and suitable ingredients. If produced in accordance with all applicable regulatory requirements, any product subject to mandatory inspection will bear the round USDA mark of inspection.

Inspected establishments are required to provide assurance that all ingredients, including non-amenable animal tissues, used in FSIS-inspected products are clean, sound, healthful, wholesome, and properly identified. Such

assurance is generally not possible with an animal killed by a hunter and then transported to the establishment by the hunter. There is not sufficient knowledge about the animal necessary to conclude that the meat from that animal is not adulterated.

Therefore, in most States, wild game species that may be legally hunted under Federal and State regulatory authority may be harvested for personal consumption only and may **not** be sold. Conversely, wild game species raised on farms, under appropriate regulations, generally may be sold. Such product must comply with any FDA requirements to the production of “game animals” as well as any applicable State or local laws.

For additional information about what is permitted in your State, please contact your State fish and wildlife regulatory agency, State health department, or State department of agriculture. Information about Federal regulations on migratory species can be obtained from the U.S. Department of the Interior’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by calling 1-800-344-9453 or visiting [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

As with any perishable meat, raw or undercooked meat from wild game can contain harmful bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli* O157:H7. Improper temperature control, processing (drying), cooking, and handling may lead to bacterial growth and foodborne illness. Safe handling and cooking instructions for products produced from wild game are available on FSIS’ Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Farm\\_Raised\\_Game/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Farm_Raised_Game/index.asp).

If you have any questions regarding the voluntary inspection of wild game species, please contact the Small Plant Help Desk at 1-877-FSISHelp (1-877-374-7435) or [InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov).





# Reminder: AskFSIS Is Always Available To Answer Your Questions

By Jane Johnson, DVM

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the AskFSIS website with tabs for Home, About FSIS, News & Events, Fact Sheets, Careers, Forms, Help, Contact Us, and En Español. Below the navigation bar are buttons for 'Answers' and 'My Questions'. A search bar contains the placeholder text 'Find the answer to your question' and a 'Search' button. A 'Log In | Sign Up' link is visible in the top right corner.

**A**skFSIS is a user-friendly tool developed to assist owners and operators of small and very small plants with questions 24 hours a day. You can find answers to questions on inspection-related policies, programs, systems, and procedures. You can also search the knowledge base, submit a new question, or sign up to be notified when answers are updated.

To use *askFSIS*, start by searching the knowledge base. If you're unable to find the answer you're looking for, you can access the "Submit a Question" tab to submit a question to the FSIS support staff. (The "Submit a Question" tab will only be activated once you've performed a search and have accessed an answer.) The system may suggest possible answers, which you can view before finally submitting your question.

You must have a customer account in order to submit a question or access "My Questions." To create an account, use the "Login" tab. If you already have a customer account, but have forgotten your password, enter your user ID and receive your password by email.

Answers to questions submitted by an individual are only accessible to the person who submitted the question, unless the individual requests that the answer be sent to other individuals or elects to forward it to

others. However, if FSIS determines that the question and answer could be helpful to a broad audience, the agency will modify the question to be more general and post the question and answer. These publically posted questions and answers go through a clearance process before being posted to *askFSIS* for anyone to view.

FSIS' Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) analyzes all questions received through *askFSIS* in order to help identify the agency's policy development needs with regard to inspection-related issues. Information on specific topics such as directives, notices, Interactive Knowledge Exchange (IKE) Scenarios, or Humane Interactive Knowledge Exchange scenarios are collected and analyzed for trends to identify policy gaps. If a trend is identified, one or more questions and answers will be developed and subjected to a defined set of steps in the *askFSIS* clearance process. The final, cleared *askFSIS* question and answer is posted by the OPPD Knowledge Base Administrator into *askFSIS*.

*AskFSIS* may be found on the FSIS Web site at <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/list>. If you have policy-related questions, contact FSIS' Policy Development Division in Omaha, NE, at (800) 233-3935.

## Commonly Asked Questions & Answers

**Q.** *The cooperative interstate shipment program is limited to establishments that employ fewer than 25 employees on average. Are part-time and temporary employees counted the same as full-time employees or are they counted based on full-time equivalent positions?*

**A.** Part-time and temporary employees, as well as temporary and part-time volunteers involved in meat and poultry products production, are counted the same as full-time employees for purposes of qualifying for the cooperative interstate shipment program.

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**Q.** *When counting employees for purposes of the cooperative interstate shipment program, should all individuals employed by the establishment be counted or only those who handle meat or poultry products?*

**A.** Each establishment's average number of employees will be calculated by counting all individuals employed by the establishment, excluding the employees who do not come into contact with the meat or poultry products produced by the establishment. Volunteers who handle meat or poultry products will be counted as employees for purposes of the cooperative interstate shipment program.

For example, if the owner of a facility with a restaurant wholesales burritos, those employees who are involved in producing the wholesale burritos would count as employees. Those employees who work in the restaurant serving customers would not. Employees who perform solely administrative functions and who do not handle meat or poultry products will not be counted either.

When an establishment conducts multiple operations, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish employees associated with the meat or poultry operations from those who are not. For example, an individual employed as a cashier at an establishment's deli operations may also slice and package meat or poultry products produced by the establishment. The standard adopted in this final rule clearly distinguishes employees whose duties are associated with handling the meat or poultry products produced by an establishment from those who are not. It also ensures that the establishments eligible for the cooperative Interstate Shipment Program will remain limited to certain small and very small establishments, as intended.

**Q.** *Is an establishment required to specify a frequency for monitoring its written Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)?*

**A.** No. Title 9, *Code of Federal Regulations* 416.12 requires an establishment to specify a frequency for implementing its procedures in Sanitation SOPs, not for monitoring the implementation of its Sanitation SOPs. Per 9 CFR 416.13(c), an establishment must monitor daily the implementation of the procedures in its Sanitation SOPs. Additionally, per 9 CFR 416.16(a), an establishment must maintain daily records documenting its implementation and monitoring of the procedures in the Sanitation SOPs.

**Q.** *Will a small retail business, like a butcher shop, be exempt from the 2010 Nutrition Labeling Final Rule?*

**A.** Probably, it is likely that a small retail business, like a butcher shop, will qualify for the small business exemption for ground or chopped products under 9 CFR 317.400(a)(1) and 381.500(a)(1). There is no small business exemption for the "major cuts" of single-ingredient, raw meat and poultry products. Therefore, a small retail business will be required to provide nutrition information for the major cuts of single-ingredient, raw meat and poultry products on labels or on point-of-purchase materials (e.g., signs, posters, or pamphlets). Nutrition information for the major cuts of single-ingredient, raw meat and poultry products are currently available at [www.fmi.org/consumer/nutrifacts/](http://www.fmi.org/consumer/nutrifacts/) or [www.ars.usda.gov/nutrientdata](http://www.ars.usda.gov/nutrientdata).

FSIS is also going to make point-of-purchase materials for the major cuts of single-ingredient, raw meat and poultry products available on FSIS' Web site.