



FSIS Finalizes New Food Safety Measures to Reduce *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in Poultry

On Feb. 4, 2016, FSIS announced the finalization of new federal standards to reduce *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in ground chicken and turkey products, as well as in raw chicken breasts, legs, and wings. Based on scientific risk assessments, FSIS estimates that implementation of these standards will lead to an average of 50,000 prevented illnesses annually.

As part of this move to make chicken and turkey items that Americans frequently purchase safer to eat, FSIS has also updated its microbial testing schedule at poultry facilities and will soon begin posting more information online about individual companies' food safety performance.

FSIS uses pathogen reduction performance standards to assess the food safety performance of establishments that prepare meat and poultry products. By making the standards for ground poultry tougher to meet, ground poultry products nationwide will have less contamination and therefore result in fewer foodborne illnesses. FSIS implemented performance standards for whole chickens in 1996, but has since learned that *Salmonella* levels increase as chicken is further processed into parts. Poultry parts like breasts, wings and others represent 80 percent of the chicken available for Americans to purchase. By creating a standard for chicken parts, and by performing regulatory testing at a point closer to the final product, FSIS can greatly reduce consumer exposure to *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

Continue on Page 2

In This Issue

- 1 FSIS Finalizes New Food Safety Measures
- 1 Secretary Vilsack To Brief Stakeholders on FY 2017 Budget
- 1 Export Requirements
- 2 We Want to Hear From You
- 3 The FSIS *Salmonella* Action Plan
- 3 Food Recalls and Alerts
- 3 Avoid a Food Safety Penalty This Super Bowl Sunday
- 4 FSIS Policy Updates
- 4 FSIS Expands Residue Testing in Siluriformes Muscle
- 4 Food Defense Resources Available in Multiple Languages

Export Requirement Updates

The Library of Export Requirements has been updated for the following countries:

- Barbados
- Benin
- Cayman Islands
- European Union
- Japan
- Philippines
- Republic of Korea
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- United Arab Emirates
- Vietnam

For a complete list of countries, visit <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/international-affairs/exporting-products>.

Secretary Vilsack To Brief Stakeholders on FY 2017 Budget

On Feb. 9, 2016 at 2:30 p.m., USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack will provide a briefing on USDA's FY 2017 Budget in Room 107A in the Jamie L. Whitten Building.

An RSVP to attend in person is required and is due by 10:00 a.m., Monday, Feb. 8. Please email your RSVP to Intergovernmental@osec.usda.gov with the subject line "Budget Briefing RSVP" NOTE: This briefing is not for press purposes. Space is limited and will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis. Because of security procedures, we request that you check in with security at the Jefferson Drive entrance of the Whitten Building no later than 2:00 p.m. A valid form of identification must be presented to security. Street parking is very limited. The closest metro is Smithsonian Metro Station. If you have any questions, you may contact Sarah Scanlon or Alex Jacquez at 202-720-6643 or at Intergovernmental@osec.usda.gov.

...FSIS Finalizes

Continued from Page 1

“This approach to poultry inspection is based on science, supported by strong data, and will truly improve public health,” said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Al Almanza. “The new performance standards will complement the many other proactive, prevention-based food policies that we’ve put in place in recent years to make America’s supply of meat and poultry safer to eat.”

For chicken parts, ground chicken, and ground turkey, FSIS is finalizing a pathogen reduction performance standard designed to achieve at least a 30 percent reduction in illnesses from *Salmonella*. For chicken parts and ground chicken, FSIS is finalizing a pathogen reduction performance standard designed to achieve at least a 32 percent reduction in illnesses from *Campylobacter*. Because FSIS has found the prevalence for *Campylobacter* in ground turkey to be already low, the reduction for this product is estimated to be 19 percent.

After these standards were proposed in early 2015, FSIS began to use routine sampling throughout the year rather than infrequent sampling on consecutive days to assess whether establishments’ processes are effectively addressing *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. Once establishments have completed a full set of testing under the new standards, the agency will also begin posting online which facilities pass, meet or fail the new standards.

An estimated 1.2 million foodborne illnesses are thought to be caused every year by *Salmonella* with approximately one-third or 360,000 of those illnesses attributed to FSIS-regulated products. In 2013, the agency released a *Salmonella* Action Plan, which created a blueprint for the agency to address this pathogen of significant public health concern.

Over the past six years, USDA has collaborated extensively with other federal partners to safeguard America’s food supply, prevent foodborne illnesses and improve consumers’ knowledge about the food they eat. FSIS is working to strengthen federal food safety efforts and develop strategies that emphasize a three-dimensional approach to prevent foodborne illness: prioritizing prevention; strengthening surveillance and enforcement; and improving response and recovery.

Some of the other steps taken to improve the safety of meat and poultry include adopting a zero-tolerance policy for raw beef products containing six additional strains of shiga-toxin producing *E. coli*; ensuring that beef products that have been mechanically tenderized are labeled as such and include validated cooking instructions; implementing a new “test and hold” policy in 2012, which significantly reduces consumer exposure to unsafe meat products; and working closely with FDA and CDC to collectively form the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC), which focuses on projects related to foodborne illness source attribution and will try to improve the classification of foods implicated in foodborne disease outbreaks.

Consumers with food safety questions can “Ask Karen,” the FSIS virtual representative available 24 hours a day at AskKaren.gov or via smartphone at m.askkaren.gov. The toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) is available in English and Spanish and can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day. The online Electronic Consumer Complaint Monitoring System can also be accessed 24 hours a day at: www.fsis.usda.gov/reportproblem.

We Want to Hear From You

The *Constituent Update* Content and Technical Review Committee seeks feedback from its readers. Please let us know what you think about the *Constituent Update* and send comments and suggestions regarding content to FSISUpdate@fsis.usda.gov. If you aren’t regularly receiving the *Constituent Update*, you can sign up for it at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/newsroom/meetings/newsletters/constituent-updates>.

FSIS *Constituent Update* is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Staff Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

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The FSIS Salmonella Action Plan: A Two Year Update

On Feb. 4, 2016, FSIS released “The *Salmonella* Action Plan: A Two Year Update.” An estimated 1.2 million illnesses are thought to be caused every year by *Salmonella*, with approximately 375,000 *Salmonella* illnesses attributed to FSIS-regulated products in Fiscal Year 2015. After a decade in which there was little progress in bringing down the rate of illness from *Salmonella*, the FSIS Administrator established the Strategic Performance Working Group (SPWG) in 2012 to critically review data and to solicit and coordinate new ideas within the Agency on how to improve the Agency’s performance. Its first target was *Salmonella*.

On December 4, 2013, FSIS released its *Salmonella* Action Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan), which outlined a list of priority near-term and longer-term actions developed by the SPWG that the Agency intended to take to address *Salmonella* in FSIS-regulated products.

FSIS has completed nearly all of the activities listed in *Salmonella* Action Plan at this time and because most of the actions listed in the Plan have been completed or are nearing completion, FSIS will not provide future Plan-specific updates. For more information, visit <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/foodborne-illness-and-disease/salmonella/sap-two-year>.

Avoid a Food Safety Penalty This Super Bowl Sunday

The Super Bowl is the most-watched television program in the United States and this year’s 50th game is sure to take the experience to a whole new level. The game (or the ads) may be the main event, but the food usually steals the show. With more than 1.3 billion chicken wings and four million pizzas expected to be eaten during the big game, there are plenty of opportunities for a food safety penalty to occur.

“This Super Bowl Sunday, sports fans across the U.S. will have a great time watching the game with friends and family, while sharing some of our favorite foods that we are fortunate in this country to enjoy,” said Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Al Almanza. “A long game and a big crowd means more opportunities for food poisoning, but some easy precautions can go far in preventing illness.”

To keep you and your guests’ food safe this Super Bowl, FSIS has pulled together the following key food safety plays:

- To escape a delay of game, use effective clock management with your food. Perishable foods should not be kept at room temperature for more than two hours. Switch out these items during half time to prevent the same foods from sitting out the whole game.
- Avoid a holding call by keeping hot food hot and cold food cold. Food should remain at a safe temperature and out of the “Danger Zone.” The Danger Zone is the temperature range between 40 °F and 140 °F where bacteria multiply rapidly.
- Avoid a false start by using a food thermometer to ensure that meat and poultry are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Raw beef, pork, lamb and veal should be cooked to 145°F with a three minute rest time.
- Raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal should be cooked to 160 °F.
- All cuts of poultry should reach at least 165 °F.

Continue on Page 4

Food Recalls and Alerts

Stay up-to-date on FSIS’ food recall alerts by visiting FSIS’ Current Recalls and Alerts Web page at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls>.

You can also receive e-mail notifications when public health alerts and recalls are issued. Register at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/subscribe>.

...Super Bowl Sunday

Continued from Page 3

- Many cooks think they can finish their cooking play in the kitchen by checking the color and texture of meat or poultry. The only way to safely know if cooking is over and food is ready to eat is by using a food thermometer.
- Prevent an illegal use of the hands by making sure to thoroughly wash your hands before starting to prepare food, after handling any raw meat or poultry and trash, and after finishing cooking. Thoroughly wash hands by using hot water and soap for at least 20 seconds. "Splashing and dashing" doesn't count.

Learn more about key food safety practices at foodsafety.gov and on Twitter @USDAFoodSafety. Consumers with questions about food safety, can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or chat live with a food safety specialist at AskKaren.gov, available from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time Monday through Friday, in English or Spanish.

FSIS Expands Residue Testing in Siluriformes Muscle

Two methods in the FSIS Chemistry Laboratory Guidebook have been updated for use in the Agency's enforcement of the provisions of the Federal Meat Inspection Act that apply to Siluriformes. The method "Screening and Confirmation of Animal Drug Residues by UHPLC-MS-MS," also known as the Multi-Residue Method (MRM), now analyzes for 90 different chemical compounds and has been expanded to include Siluriformes muscle, along with muscle from several other species, including beef, pork, poultry, sheep, goat and horse. Another method, "Screening and Confirmation of Four Nitrofurans Metabolites by Liquid Chromatography-Tandem Mass Spectrometry," has also been extended to include Siluriformes muscle along with poultry muscle.

The agency intends to begin using both of these methods after March 7, 2016. The methods are available at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/science/laboratories-and-procedures/guidebooks-and-methods/chemistry-laboratory-guidebook>.

Food Defense Resources Available in Multiple Languages

FSIS has developed a number of tools and resources to help industry identify food defense vulnerabilities, implement food defense measures, and develop a functional food defense plan. In order to ensure these tools and resources are widely available to industry, FSIS has translated many of these items into other languages including Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Recently translated materials include "Food Defense Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry, and Processed Egg Products" and "FSIS Food Safety and Food Defense: Information for In-Commerce Firms." For a complete list of food defense resources, please visit www.fsis.usda.gov/fooddefense. If you identify a need to have food defense materials translated into additional languages, please contact FDAS at food-defense@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Policy Updates

FSIS notices and directives on public health and regulatory issues are available at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/regulations>. The following policies were recently issued:

Notice 08-16 - *Consumer Safety Inspectors Responsibilities at Fish (of the order Siluriformes) Slaughter Establishments During The 18-Month Transitional Period*

Notice 09-16 - *Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) Responsibilities Related to Siluriformes Fish and Fish Products*

Notice 10-16 - *Inspection Responsibilities and Authorities for Reducing Evisceration Line Speed*

Notice 11-16 - *Supplemental Information on Sampling Projects and Supplies*

Docket No. FSIS-2014-0023 - *New Performance Standards for Salmonella and Campylobacter in Not-Ready-to-Eat Comminuted Chicken and Turkey Products and Raw Chicken Parts*