

FSIS Report

Executive Board Meeting, Conference for Food Protection, April 7, 2006

Federal Register Notice Docket No. 04-026N

Salmonella Verification Sample Result Reporting: Agency Policy and Use in Public Health Protection

On February 27, 2006, FSIS published a notice in the Federal Register announcing changes in how it uses results from its *Salmonella* verification sampling program for meat and poultry establishments to enhance public health protection. The Agency is also changing how it reports these results. These actions follow an April 2003 FSIS Federal Register Notice asking for public comment on whether and how Agency policy could be improved.

This notice announces a new strategy that FSIS is pursuing to reduce the public health threat posed by *Salmonella* in meat and poultry products.

FSIS will begin sending the results of each individual *Salmonella* verification sample to meat and poultry establishments that request them. The Agency will also post aggregate *Salmonella* results by species quarterly, rather than annually, on its website. This information will allow the public to track the industry's progress in reducing *Salmonella* levels in their products. In addition, the Agency will start testing turkey carcasses.

The Agency will also provide a new compliance guideline containing information that FSIS has found to be relevant to control *Salmonella*.

The 2005 *Salmonella* verification results can be accessed at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Progress_Report_Salmonella_Testing/index.asp

FSIS Directive 10,240.5

Enforcement, Investigations, and Analysis Officer (EIAO) Assessment of Compliance with the *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) Regulation and Introduction of Phase 2 of the Lm Risk-Based Verification Testing Program

On March 15, 2006, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a directive to provide EIAOs and PHVs trained in the EIAO methodology for collecting samples under the new Routine Lm Risk-Based (RLm) sampling program. The directive provides instructions to EIAOs/PHVs in assessing an establishment's food safety system for compliance with 9 CFR Part 430.

FSIS Directive 10,240.4, Revision 1

Verification Procedures for Consumer Safety Inspectors for the *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) Regulation and Introduction of Phase 2 of the Lm Risk-Based Verification Testing Program

On March 15, 2006, FSIS reissued a directive to provide direction to Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSIs) in implementing the new Routine Lm Risk-Based (RLm) sampling program in FSIS Directive 10,240.5. The directive provides verification instructions for Ready-to-Eat products when establishment product disposition occurs off-site and provides CSIs with instructions to verify whether establishments are complying with regulatory requirements in 9 CFR Part 430.

The Agency also reissued FSIS Directive 10,240.4, but directed it strictly to CSIs. This directive includes sample collection responsibilities for CSIs under the ALLRTE and RTE001 sampling projects.

Consumer Guidelines for Safe Cooking of Poultry Products

FSIS has requested the National Advisory Committee for Microbiological Criteria For Foods (NACMCF) to provide advice on developing guidelines for consumers for the safe cooking of poultry products. The NACMCF provided the following recommendations based on the seven questions posed by FSIS: (March 24,2006)

For consumers (April 5, 2006, FSIS issued the consumer advisory)

- 1) A single minimum internal product endpoint temperature of 165 F for cooking poultry for consumers to ensure microbiological safety of cooked poultry.
- 2) The guidelines should indicate that for consumer acceptability and palatability, a higher temperature may be needed e.g. 170 F for whole muscle breast meat, 180 f for whole muscle thigh meat
- 3) The product condition or state before cooking should be considered in the guidelines and in the preparation/cooking instruction to the consumer
- 4) The guidelines should convey that a longer cooking time is needed if the product is frozen at the beginning of the cooking process, and that microwaving raw product from a frozen state is not advisable unless the the package provides substantial instructions for ascertaining that the product has achieved the recommended endpoint temperature.
- 5) Guidance to consumers should address how to properly measure product temperature using calibrated thermometer.

For food processors

- 1) Product label should indicate if product is RTE or NRTE. A warning to fully cook the product may be necessary on the label if the product is partially cooked or appears to be fully cooked. The principal display panel on the label should be the primary focus of for certain safety information (e.g. that the product contains uncooked poultry and must be cooked thoroughly for safety)

- 2) When validating cooking instructions and developing guidelines or labeling, the process must take into account: 1) how the consumer is likely to interpret cooking instructions, and 2) what the consumer may actually do in preparing and cooking the product. The cooking process must be designed to eliminate Salmonella which is the most resistant pathogen of public health concern for raw poultry.
- 3) The limitations of each type of process should be considered when developing and validating cooking guidelines or instructions. The limitations include difficulty of temperature measurement, uneven heating, equipment differences, partially cooked surface that may appear as if food is fully cooked, and the potential for having a cooked surface with an undercooked interior
- 4) When a product containing uncooked poultry appears to be cooked, it is necessary to explicitly state that the product contains uncooked poultry and must be thoroughly cooked.

The discussion of the safe cooking guidelines is significant because it bears on the Agency's recent recall of a frozen raw chicken product that was contaminated with Salmonella enteritidis. The Agency said that the numerous illnesses associated with the product established that it was unhealthful and thus unfit for food and adulterated. The Agency's belief is that appropriate cooking instructions will render the product safe and unadulterated.

The questions addressed are:

1. What are the limitations in various cooking methods, particularly microwaving, that may need to be conveyed through labeling and other means to ensure that poultry cooked by consumers is safe?
2. Do cooking requirements differ by type of poultry (e.g., chicken versus turkey, whole carcasses versus parts, ground products with different levels of fat, raw versus partially cooked)?
3. What effect, if any, does the condition of poultry just prior to cooking (e.g., chilled versus frozen) have on the cooking treatment?
4. What is the single time/temperature combination for each type of poultry (see question 2 above) for consumers to use to ensure safe cooked poultry?
5. What parameters should inspected establishments consider in developing validated cooking instructions for use by consumers?
6. Since consumers typically are not as capable of calibrating the cooking equipment and temperature measuring devices as inspected establishments, what, if any, special considerations should be considered in identification of safe cooking guidance for consumers (e.g., adding a safety margin to the minimum time/temperature)?
7. What safety-based labeling considerations should be considered for conveying safe cooking instructions to consumers?

The official transcript of the meeting and the report is posted on the following website:
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/About/NACMCF>

**Federal Register Proposed Rule Docket No. 04-041P
Determining Net Weight for Meat and Poultry Products**

On March 28, FSIS issued a document in the Federal Register that proposes to amend the Federal meat and poultry products inspection regulations in order that they reference the most recent (2005 version) of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Handbook 133, which contains standards for determining the reasonable variations allowed for the declared net weight on labels of immediate containers of meat and poultry products.

The Agency is also proposing to consolidate the separate net weight regulations for meat and poultry products in a new part of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) which will be applicable to both meat and poultry products.

**FSIS Notice 17-06
Clarification Regarding Squab Inspection**

On March 22, 2006, FSIS issued a notice to clarify that squabs are eligible to receive the mark of inspection when shipped with the head remaining (but not the feet) attached to the carcass. Squabs may be considered wholesome, not adulterated, and eligible to receive the mark of inspection when shipped with an attached head, provided that the carcass has been satisfactorily bled and eviscerated including the crop.

The establishment must meet the requirements under 9CFR Part 381 that apply to poultry and 9 CFR Parts 416 and 417.

**Federal Register Proposed Rule Docket No. 04-006P
Availability of Lists of Retail Consignees during Meat or Poultry Product Recalls**

On March 7, 2006, FSIS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register to amend the federal meat and poultry products inspection regulations for the purpose of making available to the public lists of the retail consignees of meat and poultry products during a recall. The lists are compiled by FSIS employees as part of recall effectiveness checks. FSIS is proposing to routinely post these retail consignee lists on its website as they are developed by the Agency during its recall verification activities.