

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE**

WASHINGTON, DC

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**FSIS NOTICE**

50-12

8/23/12

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**INSPECTION RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES FOR REDUCING SLAUGHTER  
OR EVISCERATION LINE SPEED**

**I. PURPOSE**

A. This notice reissues instructions previously issued in FSIS Notice 08-11, Inspection Responsibilities and Authorities for Slaughter or Evisceration Line Speed Process Control. Based on information gathered from a survey of inspection program personnel (IPP) and information from establishments, this notice clarifies the circumstances in which IPP are to stop the line (section IV.). The notice also provides additional instructions to IPP for ensuring a safe work environment (sections III.E. and IV. B.). In addition, this notice has been updated to include instructions for the Public Health Information System (PHIS).

B. This notice instructs Inspectors-in-Charge (IICs), Public Health Veterinarians (PHVs), and off-line and on-line IPP of their responsibilities and authorities relating to assessing and reducing slaughter or evisceration line speed.

**II. BACKGROUND**

The Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) and the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) provide that there is to be an inspection to assess whether carcasses are not adulterated and can be passed for human consumption. 21 U.S.C. 455 and 21 U.S.C. 604.

**III. PHV and IIC AUTHORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. PHVs and IICs are to ensure that IPP can perform a post-mortem inspection of poultry and livestock carcasses at all times.

B. PHVs and IICs are to slow maximum allowed line speeds when slaughter process control is not maintained because of inconsistencies in size, weight, class of animal or bird, health, pathology, contamination, sanitary dressing, or presentation (9 CFR 381.65(a), 381.67, 381.68, 381.76, and 310.1(b) (1)).

C. PHVs and IICs assigned to poultry slaughter establishments are to:

1. Perform or assign presentation checks using appropriate presentation forms and otherwise assess presentation and evaluate the health status of the flock as often as is necessary. PHVs and IICs are to determine whether the speed of the line is affecting the ability of IPP to perform the proper inspection procedures (Section XI. of FSIS Directive 6100.3, Poultry Ante-mortem and Post-mortem Inspection);
2. Reduce line speeds according to instructions provided on presentation forms (FSIS Form 6510 series) or to a speed at which IPP can perform the proper inspection procedures;

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3. Measure the maximum allowed line speed using physical methods .The maximum allowed line speed is a whole number. Any line speed measurement resulting in a fraction is to be rounded up;
4. Document any reduction of line speed on a non-compliance record (NR) only when the maximum allowed line speed is exceeded, or when the allowable number of presentation errors that call for an immediate reduction in line speed is reached. In the NR, the PHV or IIC is to describe findings that support the reduction in line speed and cite appropriate regulations (9 CFR 381.76, 381.67, 381.68, and 381.65) using the PHIS Other Inspection Requirements task; and
5. Assess as quickly as possible the presentation and health status of the flock when on–line IPP report potential problems with presentation, sanitary dressing, contamination, or pathology or disease status of the birds.

D. PHVs and IICs assigned to livestock slaughter establishments are to:

1. Determine, or assign verifications to determine, whether inspection procedures cannot be adequately performed at the current line speed because of particular deficiencies in carcass preparation or presentation by the establishment at that higher speed, or because the health condition of the particular animals indicates a need for a more extensive inspection (9 CFR 310.1(b)(1)). PHVs and IICs are to reduce the line speed to one at which IPP can perform the proper post-mortem inspection procedures;
2. In conjunction with specific verifications of slaughter line speed process control, determine, or assign verification activities to determine, whether the establishment’s slaughter and sanitary dressing procedures are controlling contamination that may affect IPP’s ability to perform proper post-mortem inspection procedures (Section X. D. of FSIS Directive 6410.1 Verifying Sanitary Dressing and Process Control Procedures in Slaughter Operations of Cattle of Any Age);
3. Use the PHIS Sanitation Performance Standards Verification task to document noncompliance in accordance with Section X. D. of FSIS Directive 6410.1 when the IIC determines that there is evidence that insanitary conditions have been created resulting in the inability of the on-line IPP to adequately perform the proper post-mortem inspection procedures;
4. Use the PHIS Other Inspection Requirements task to document noncompliance when the maximum allowed line speed has been exceeded, or when particular deficiencies in carcass preparation and presentation have resulted in the PHV or IIC slowing the line speed. In the NR the PHV or IIC is to describe findings that support the reduction in line speed citing 9 CFR 310.1(b)(1);
5. Measure the maximum allowed line speed using physical methods. The maximum allowed line speed is a whole number. Any line speed measurement resulting in a fraction is to be rounded up; and
6. Assess as quickly as possible in conjunction with sanitary dressing verifications, as appropriate, the presentation and health status of the lot when on–line IPP report potential problems with presentation, sanitary dressing, contamination, pathology, or the health status of the animals.

E. The PHV or IIC is responsible for ensuring a safe work environment for IPP. He or she is to report safety hazards according to instructions in FSIS Directive 4791.12, Reporting and Correcting Occupational Hazards. If he or she observes a significant safety hazard for either IPP or establishment employees, the PHV or IIC is to contact the FSIS Occupational Safety and Health Specialist assigned to the local District who is to investigate and take the appropriate action. If an inspector is injured, the

supervisors are to follow the procedures in FSIS Directive 4810.1, Rev 2, On-The-Job Injury and Illness Compensation, and can contact the FSIS Workers' Compensation Branch directly for assistance at 1-800-370-3747.

**NOTE:** If an imminent danger (e.g. fire, gas explosion, natural gas leaks, broken ammonia line, etc.) is found or reported, the PHV or IIC is to remove employees from the workplace (FSIS Directive 4791.12, Section III. Reporting and Correcting Occupational Hazards).

F. PHVs and IICs are responsible for ensuring that each on-line inspector is aware of his or her authority as described below. The PHV or IIC also is to regularly correlate appropriate Agency standards and thus monitor performance of each inspector to ensure uniformity of inspection procedures and actions.

#### **IV. ON-LINE IPP AUTHORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. On-line inspectors do not have the authority to slow line speeds.

B. In order to ensure their safety and health, on-line inspectors are to stop the line for hazards needing immediate intervention. Some examples, not all inclusive, are preventing injury because of malfunctioning of automated shackles, saws, or other equipment or accidental splashing of bile or fluid in the eyes. FSIS on-line inspectors are to stop the line if establishment employees report that an imminent danger is present.

C. On-line inspectors assigned to a poultry slaughter establishment are to:

1. Notify the PHV, IIC, or off-line IPP if they detect trends of increasing contamination, pathology, disease, or improper presentation;
2. Stop the line at times needing immediate intervention to prevent the production of adulterated or unwholesome product. For example:
  - a. If numerous birds in a row are presented with excessive contamination or disease conditions or are improperly presented at the inspection station, then IPP are to notify the PHV or IIC, and the line is to be stopped until the immediate situation is corrected. IPP are to approve the establishment's restarting the line.
  - b. If the occurrence of such affected birds is occasional, the on-line inspector is to direct the establishment helper to "hang back" the carcass without stopping the line.
3. Stop the line when the on-line inspectors' ability to conduct a complete post mortem inspection is being impeded by the establishment helper or other personnel.

D. On-line inspectors assigned to a livestock slaughter establishment are to:

1. Notify the PHV, IIC, or off-line IPP if they detect trends of increasing contamination, pathology, disease, or improper presentation.
2. Stop the line according to:
  - a. FSIS Directive 6420.2, Verification of Procedures for Control of Fecal Material, Ingesta and Milk in Slaughter Operations (Part II. 1. A.), and
  - b. FSIS Directive 6100.2, Post-mortem Livestock Inspection (Ch. II. 1. A. Note).

**NOTE:** In livestock operations there may be a rail out system that may reduce the need to stop the line.

3. Stop the line at times when the on-line inspector's ability to conduct a complete post mortem inspection is being impeded by the establishment helper or other establishment personnel. IPP are to approve the establishment's restarting the line.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS

On a bi-annual basis, the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) will review and identify relevant noncompliances associated with line speed issues and work with the Data Analysis and Integration Group (DAIG) within the Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP) to analyze and interpret the results.

Refer questions regarding this notice to the Policy Development Division through askFSIS at <http://askfsis.custhelp.com> or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935.



Acting Assistant Administrator  
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