



# Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

## How to Get Your Technical Questions Answered

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) takes customer service very seriously. There are two primary ways to submit technical and policy-related questions—askFSIS and a toll-free number, both managed by FSIS’ Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD). AskFSIS is an online service where you can search for answers or pose a question. The toll-free number allows customers to call a central location and then be routed to the appropriate OPPD staff.

Questions submitted through askFSIS are automatically routed to one of several OPPD divisions for a response. Specifically, labeling questions are routed to the Labeling and Program Delivery Division (LPDD), sampling questions are routed to the Risk and Innovations Management Division (RIMD), and export questions are routed to the International Program Division (IPD). All other domestic-inspection questions are routed to the Policy Development Division (PDD).

Phone calls to the Agency’s toll-free number (800) 233-3935 will be referred to the appropriate division as well. To avoid dialing a long-distance number, follow the prompts in the PDD menu to be automatically forwarded to the appropriate division free of charge.

Follow these prompts to reach the correct division:

- At the main menu, press 1 to reach the OPPD/PDD submenu.
- At the OPPD/PDD submenu, select one of the following:
  - Press 2 to reach IPD
  - Press 3 to reach LPPD
  - Press 4 to reach RIMD
  - Press 5 to reach PDD

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## Export Requirement Updates



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

**Chile**  
**Colombia**  
**Ecuador**  
**Hong Kong**  
**Japan**  
**Sri Lanka**  
**Taiwan**

Complete information can be found at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations\\_&\\_Policies/Export\\_Information/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp).

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## CDC Releases 2008 Foodborne Illness Data

On April 9, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the release of the report, *Preliminary FoodNet Data on the Incidence of Infection with Pathogens Transmitted Commonly Through Food*. FoodNet is a collaborative working group of federal and state agencies, including FSIS, that collects and analyzes foodborne illness data from ten U.S. states.

The data show that there was no significant change in the incidence of foodborne illnesses in 2008 compared to the last three years, indicating that overall food safety efforts have essentially reached a plateau. The report notes that several major foodborne outbreaks associated with fresh produce and peanuts may have influenced the the *Salmonella* results.

The report cites progress in the reduction of *Salmonella* contamination of poultry due, in part, to the 2006 FSIS *Salmonella* Initiative Program. The program is designed to produce improvements in control of *Salmonella* in raw classes of livestock and poultry during slaughter and grinding operations. In broilers the number of positive samples have decreased from 11.4 percent positive for the pathogen in 2006, to less than 7.3 percent in 2008.

“We have worked hard to reduce contamination in FSIS regulated products and have seen marked success in *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes*,” said Dr. David Goldman, FSIS Assistant Administrator for the Office of Public Health Science. “We are concerned about the lack of progress in reducing the incidence of foodborne illness and believe this points out the need for better attribution.”

Pathogen reduction has remained a challenge; however FSIS continues to meet this challenge head on. Since 2006, FSIS has engaged in discussions with key stakeholder groups to promote pathogen control. These discussions have resulted in additional activities and notices to further reduce the incidence of *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination. For example, FSIS issued draft guidelines, implemented a more sensitive testing broth and line trim and component sampling.

The full report is available on the CDC Web site at [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5614.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5614.pdf).

## FSIS Issues Directive

FSIS issues directives and notices to enhance the Agency's efforts in protecting public health. The following directive was issued this week:

- Directive 7120.1, *Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat and Poultry Products* (Amendment to Attachment 1)

All directives and notices are available on the FSIS Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations\\_&\\_policies/FSIS\\_notices\\_index/index](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/FSIS_notices_index/index).

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## Updates on FSIS

### Testing for *E. coli*

Weekly updates for the Agency's raw beef *E. coli* sampling program are posted to FSIS' Web site.

For comparative 2008 and 2009 results, go to [www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground\\_Beef\\_E.Coli\\_Testing\\_Results/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.Coli_Testing_Results/index.asp).



## Food Safety Information in 140 Characters or Less

On March 17, FSIS stepped in to the social media space of *Twitter*, an online microblogging channel, to provide food safety information and Agency announcements. This effort comes as FSIS seeks to incorporate social media with more traditional news and education channels. After three weeks, the FSIS *Twitter* feed had more than 600 followers that receive FSIS "tweets." Tweets are short statements that are shared in 140 characters or less.

The White House noticed the FSIS service through *Twitter* and featured the activities on their March 27 blog, calling it "a smart match." (See [www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/27/Around-the-Agencies-Back-to-Nature/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/27/Around-the-Agencies-Back-to-Nature/).)

Users will receive updates about news and recall releases, podcasts in English and Spanish and videocasts in American Sign Language. In addition, food safety tips relevant to events, seasons and holidays are also provided to the community.

You can follow FSIS at [twitter.com/USDAFoodSafety](http://twitter.com/USDAFoodSafety).

## USDA Offers Food Safety Tips for Consuming Ham

With springtime holidays fast approaching, many families will be sitting down to ham dinners. Cured hams are processed under strict USDA guidelines to eliminate foodborne pathogens and other food safety risks. When the cured hams leave the establishment with the USDA mark of inspection, consumers should know that the products have been fully inspected for safety and wholesomeness.

Ready-to-eat and canned hams are cooked at an establishment and can be safely eaten right out of the package. Fresh hams must be cooked by the consumer before eating and should bear safe handling instructions on the label.

Leftovers from spiral-cut hams may be stored in the refrigerator three to five days or frozen no more than one to two months for best flavor and texture. FSIS recommends only reheating individual slices, not the entire ham, as heating can dry out the meat. If you must reheat the entire ham, cover it with heavy aluminum foil.

For more information about ham storing and cooking, as well as safe handling and preparation tips, visit the FSIS Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Ham/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Ham/index.asp).

## FSIS Posts New Podcasts

Tune in and subscribe to podcasts that offer helpful information on the selection, handling and preparation of meat and poultry products to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

This week, FSIS released podcasts helpful to both consumers and plant owners and operators. Check out these new podcasts on the FSIS Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/news\\_&\\_events/Podcasts/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/Podcasts/index.asp) for the industry podcast and [www.fsis.usda.gov/En\\_Espanol/Podcasts\\_SP/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/En_Espanol/Podcasts_SP/index.asp) for the Spanish language consumer podcast.

### Food Safety at Home— Power Outages (Spanish)

### Humane Handling of Livestock at the Plant, Part 2 of 7

Food Safety at Home podcasts in English are also available at [www.fsis.usda.gov/news\\_&\\_events/Podcasts/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/Podcasts/index.asp).



## Antimicrobial Treatment List Now Available

On April 7, FSIS made available a list of antimicrobial (decontamination) treatments that can be used as processing aids on meat and poultry products by issuing FSIS Directive 7120.1, Amendment 18, *Salmonella* Antimicrobials for Poultry Products.

To better concisely capture the treatments that can be used specifically on post-chilled poultry carcasses or parts and trimmings, on April 9, FSIS also posted a specific entry in *askFSIS*, the Agency's online forum for inspected-related questions and answers.

The *askFSIS* entry lists the antimicrobials specifically acceptable for use to potentially reduce *Salmonella* in poultry products during second processing, or post-chill.

FSIS posted the entry at the request of the poultry industry to better help establishments begin validating controls designed to reduce the likely presence of *Salmonella* on post-chilled poultry products.

Because establishments have generally focused on controls at slaughter, FSIS is now encouraging establishments to apply antimicrobial treatments during further processing of the carcass, specifically on parts and trimmings.

To view the specific list for treating post-chilled poultry products, visit [askfsis.custhelp.com](http://askfsis.custhelp.com). The entry is available in the summary section of the *askFSIS* home page and will remain accessible by search in the "General Inspection Policy" category. Directive 7120.1 Amendment 18, *Salmonella* Antimicrobials for Poultry Products, is available on the FSIS Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/7120.1Amend18.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/7120.1Amend18.pdf).