

- 2 Spotlight
- 3 Deputy Under Secretary's
Column
- 3 Deputy Administrator's
Column
- 4 Faces of Food Safety
- 5 Safety Corner
- 6 Snapshots
- 8 Policy Updates
- 8 New FSIS One Health
Community
- 9 Recent Retirees
- 10 FSIS Hosts Employee
Engagement Best Practices
Forum
- 11 Photo of the Month
- 12 Recent Recalls

Tell Us Your FSIS Stories and Snapshots!

Send articles and photos to Beacon@usda.gov. Articles must be original works that have been cleared by your supervisor and contain the author's name and contact information. Submissions should not exceed 250 words. *The Beacon* editorial staff will edit submissions for content and length.

High-resolution photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 18 years of age.

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

January 2020

The FSIS Office of Field Operations (OFO) continues its nationwide efforts to recruit veterinarians and improve awareness about availability of veterinary careers with the Agency. OFO has participated in national conferences and veterinary school career fairs as part of the Agency's outreach efforts. FSIS values the knowledge and training that veterinarians bring to the Agency and the important work they do for public health. OFO's efforts to recruit and retain veterinarians is one of the program area's top priorities and a focus for the Agency.



Pictured, from left: Drs. Catherine Hawkins, supervisory public health veterinarian and an enforcement investigations and analysis officer, and Catherine Pierce, frontline supervisor from Des Moines District Office, participated at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine Career Exploration Fair. Photo by Dr. Maria Esteras, OFO.

FSIS Success in FY 2019 and Actions in 2020

By Laura Reiser, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7894

In fiscal year (FY) 2019, FSIS made significant progress towards its goal to modernize the Agency while fulfilling its mission to prevent foodborne illness and protect public health. FSIS employees inspected more than 164 million head of livestock and 9.83 billion poultry carcasses in the 6,500 FSIS-regulated establishments. FSIS inspection program personnel also conducted 7.1 million food safety and food defense procedures to verify meat, poultry and processed egg products are safe and wholesome. FSIS advanced science-based and data-driven initiatives to modernize policies, operations, and inspection systems.

Modernizing Swine Slaughter Inspection

One major milestone in the Agency's efforts was finalizing the rule that modernizes swine slaughter inspection. This rule will help FSIS foster innovation in the industry and increase FSIS offline inspection tasks while maintaining 100 percent carcass-by-carcass inspection. These offline tasks have a direct

impact on public health. The rule is comprised of two parts – mandatory microbial testing requirements at all swine establishments and the optional New Swine Slaughter Inspection System (NSIS). Establishments can choose to operate under NSIS or they can remain under the traditional slaughter inspection system.

Targeting *Salmonella* to Prevent Illness

For decades, FSIS has fought against foodborne illness caused by *Salmonella*. In FY 2019, the Agency focused on three activities for which it was successful. FSIS developed a revised methodology for assessing whether establishments meet applicable *Salmonella* performance for poultry products. The Agency implemented a new *Salmonella* categorization methodology in response to public comments. And, FSIS calculated and published new estimates of the prevalence of *Salmonella* in pork products.

Continued on page 10...



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up-to-date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Carol Blake, Assistant Administrator
Aaron Lavallee, Deputy Assistant Administrator
Shayla Mae Bailey, Acting Director & Editor-in-Chief
Laura Reiser, Managing Editor
Leo O'Drudy, Deputy Managing Editor
Felicia Thompson, Photography Editor
Megan Traylor, Designer

Editorial Board

Suzanne Hensell Laura Reiser
Manal Ibrahim Megan Traylor
Leo O'Drudy Jonathan Thompson

Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Mar. issue – due Feb. 1 Apr. issue – due Mar. 1
May issue – due Apr. 1 Jun issue – due May 1

Articles will be considered for publication in the order in which they are received. If your article is time sensitive, please indicate that in the subject line of your submission email. Due to the number of submissions received each month and the limited amount of space, we unfortunately cannot guarantee that your submission will be used.

The FSIS Management Council

Carmen Rottenberg	Soumaya Tohamy
Paul Kiecker	Pete Bridgeman
Karen Hunter	Carol Blake
Atiya Khan	Aaron Lavallee
Jeremy "Todd" Reed	Carl Mayes
Michelle Catlin	Carl-Martin Ruiz
Bajinder Paul	Frank Mays
Cara LeConte	C. Natalie Lui Duncan
Michelle Garner	Denise Eblen
Janet Stevens	Kis Robertson Hale
Nathan Greenwell*	Terri Nintemann
Phil Bronstein	Rachel Edelstein
Hany Sidrak	*acting

SPOTLIGHT

Collaborative Efforts with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

By Veronica Pegram-Williams, OPACE

Phone: (202) 720-7887

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is a multifaceted organization that has stayed true to its mission to protect the health and value of American agriculture and our natural resources. At FSIS-regulated establishments, our inspectors and public health veterinarians share with APHIS evidence of transmittable disease, collect product samples for APHIS testing and add the information to the Public Health Information System. Through this collaboration, the agencies have contributed to the eradication of at least 13 diseases of major economic impact to the livestock and poultry industries.

"We value our relationship with FSIS," said Kevin Shea, APHIS Administrator. "By collaborating with our FSIS partners, we are more successful in meeting our mission and in protecting American agriculture from the farm to the table."

When created in 1884, the then-Bureau of Animal Industry's (BAI) purview included conducting livestock disease research, enforcing animal import regulations and regulating the interstate movement of animals. Due to various outbreaks, eradication efforts, and numerous federal acts the BAI continued to evolve to meet the changing needs of American agriculture. During this period of change, some responsibilities were incorporated from other agencies and some were shifted to newly formed agencies.

In 1972, the BAI gained the animal and plant regulatory duties that now make up APHIS' core mission. In 1977, APHIS' meat and poultry inspection functions were transferred to FSIS, giving APHIS the ability to focus on a broader scope of health and safety. Today, APHIS protects agricultural health; provides wildlife damage and disease management; regulates genetically engineered crops; protects animal welfare, including pet travel; and protects public health, safety and natural resources that are vulnerable to pathogens and invasive pests.

Joint initiatives have helped to better coordinate food safety efforts over the years with local, state and federal agencies and cooperatives. Dr. Mark Davidson, APHIS' Associate Administrator adds, "As someone who has worked for both agencies, I know first-hand how important it is for APHIS and FSIS to work together to protect animal health and verify production of a safe food supply. We rely on each other's expertise to identify, trace and respond to animal disease issues in a way that benefits our farmers and the general public alike." The agencies do this through slaughter surveillance, veterinary services and biologics, and conditions for importation of live ruminants, products and by-products. FSIS inspection provides a key means of detecting domestic and foreign animal diseases in the U.S., such as bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, porcine brucellosis and pseudorabies. APHIS provides laboratory

Continued on page 11...

Deputy Under Secretary's Column

I've dedicated a lot of time to speaking with Members of Congress and other stakeholders. This includes visiting and listening to FSIS employees in the field and the scientists and other FSIS professionals at headquarters. I think it's important to hear the concerns of these and other groups with which FSIS and I meet, such as industry and consumer groups, to understand the diverse needs and roles that each one plays in contributing to the safety of the U.S. food supply. This has strengthened my resolve to drive the Agency toward a vision for 2020 and beyond that I believe will fortify FSIS as we move into a new decade of protecting public health.



Dr. Mindy Brashears

I believe three critical steps – leading with science, building relationships and influencing behavior changes – will guide us as we work to reduce consumer illnesses, modernize outdated inspection regulations and ensure food safety. Lives are at stake. When we lead with properly executed science, we can make rapid, well-informed decisions and develop data-driven policies.

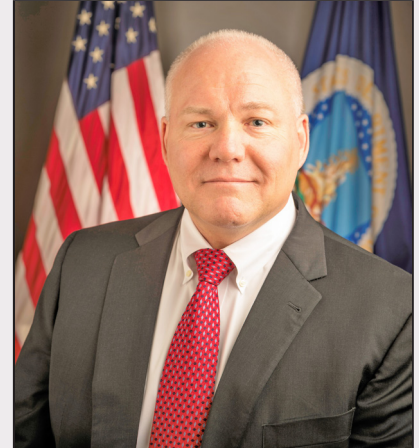
I am determined to see FSIS continue to build relationships with federal and international partners, Congress, industry, universities, employees and the public. I look forward to seeing an increase in collaborative efforts and in communication between headquarters and field staff. I will continue to visit establishments to interact with our inspectors, to fully understand their needs and to implement consistent guidelines to promote a positive work environment.

Changing habits can be difficult. Our recent research showed that even when consumers are exposed to information about correct food safety activities, they do not implement the safe food-handling measures when preparing meals. This is alarming and shows us that there are quite a few ingrained kitchen habits that need to be adjusted. I'm excited about FSIS' plans to move forward with a consumer education plan that will influence consumers to change their food-handling behaviors.

It's time to implement the vision. We have everything we need to be successful. I look forward to working with all of you in 2020.

Deputy Administrator's Column

Happy New Year! With the 2020 vision from Dr. Mindy Brashears guiding us, Administrator Carmen Rottenberg and I will continue working to advance FSIS policies that support our strategic goals.



Paul Kiecker

Some of you will begin to see changes from the implementation of the final rule for Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection. Market hog slaughter establishments that choose to opt into the New Swine Inspection System have until March 30, 2020, to notify the district office of their intent to convert. The district office will then work collaboratively with the establishment to develop a timeline for implementation that works for both the establishment and FSIS. The mandatory requirement for procedures to control contamination throughout the slaughter and dressing process took effect in large establishments on December 30, 2019, with small and very small establishments to follow in January and March 2020, respectively.

This year, we look forward to finalizing a rule to modernize egg product inspection, bringing it in line with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point principles. We will move forward with beef modernization, starting with a waiver system for plants interested in testing modernized inspection methods. Collecting data from traditional beef slaughter inspection establishments and those operating under waivers will be crucial to developing a modernized system.

We continue to focus on staffing levels in the field, exercising direct hire authority to bring food inspectors and consumer safety inspectors on board more quickly. After a temporary pause to update devices, we will resume with the roll-out of laptops/tablets (eDevices) to the field. We know that maintaining reliable connectivity in the field has been a challenge, and we are working to identify solutions.

FSIS wants all employees to have the tools they need to do their jobs effectively. Whether ensuring access to eDevices or resources to implement new policies, we're here to support our employees on the frontlines of food safety.

Dr. Raul Frontera – Rolling with 25 Years of Changes

By Suzanne Hensell, OPACE

Phone: (202) 690-3626

Dr. Raul Frontera, a frontline supervisor (FLS) in the Raleigh District's Wilson Circuit in eastern North Carolina, has served in FSIS more than 25 years. Frontera began his FSIS career in June 1994 as a supervisory public health veterinarian (SPHV) in Lewiston, North Carolina, and became an FLS in 2007. In this role, Frontera is responsible for all inspection activities at 12 food producing establishments in the circuit. He directly supervises 10 SPHVs in poultry and red meat slaughter facilities and 5 consumer safety inspectors (CSI) on patrol assignments in processing facilities. He also oversees inspection of three storage/freezer facilities that export FSIS-regulated product to foreign countries.

Frontera has seen a lot of changes at FSIS. When he started at FSIS as a SPHV in 1994, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) inspection methods had not been introduced. The Agency implemented the new methods from January 1997 to January 2000 in all FSIS- and state-inspected meat and poultry slaughter and processing establishments across the nation. Says Frontera, "HACCP was a major change for the industry; we went from telling industry what to do, to verifying that they were implementing their established food safety programs and the HACCP and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure regulations."

Frontera believes that every job in FSIS is important, because employees share the common goal of ensuring that meat, poultry and processed egg products are safe, wholesome and accurately labeled for consumers. He says that he finds this work rewarding. "Other inspectors, employees and I provide a high level of food safety service, as that is FSIS' expectation and, more importantly, the public's expectation. When I keep in mind that the public includes my family and friends, I find it rewarding when people close to me recognize what I do and how my job relates to them," said Frontera.

As the poultry slaughter industry started to transition to the New Poultry Inspection System, some team members were confused about changes with the new system. It was a big culture change. Frontera eased the transition by keeping an open dialogue with his team, sharing information that the Agency had developed to help inform them, and providing training in the new system. Frontera believes we need to be open to change. "We can't perform inspection the way we did 25 to 30 years ago. There have been a lot of changes and modernization within the food producing industry, and we have to continuously strive for improvement."



Dr. Frontera reviews establishment data in the inspection office at P-40183. Photo by Dr. Brandy Davis, OFO.

Frontera derives satisfaction from knowing he helps protect consumers and has a direct impact on the safety of the food that his family and friends eat. He takes his job responsibilities seriously and works hard to meet Agency expectations, while at the same time evaluating his circuit's needs in order to provide support the inspection team needs.

Frontera and his team put all four FSIS core values into practice every day. They are accountable, ensure the job gets done by being collaborative and exhibit teamwork. As issues arise, the team is empowered to assess problems and come up with solutions. By being solutions-oriented, he and his team can correct problems and ensure establishments are in compliance.

Service to Others

A strong believer in service to others during his career, Frontera has volunteered his time working with other agencies within USDA including the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in California during the Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak in 2003; with the Food and Drug Administration sharing inspection responsibilities within the food processing industry; working with FSIS Human Resources performing recruitment activities for public health veterinarians (PHV) and food inspectors; and as a PHV mentor with FSIS. Frontera actively participated in the first i-Impact initiative to help employees working in slaughter and processing establishments throughout the Wilson Circuit and personnel in the Raleigh District Office reconnect to the mission of our Agency and demonstrate how every single employee has an impact on food safety and public health.

Prior to Joining FSIS

Frontera earned a bachelor of science degree in Agricultural Science in 1981 from the University of Puerto Rico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts/Mayaguez and his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 1985 from National University Pedro Henriquez Urena in Santo Domingo, Dominican

Continued on page 9...

A Review of Occupational Safety and Health Requirements

By Sarath Seneviratne, OM

Phone: (240) 755-2795

While ensuring the safety of the food supply, FSIS inspection program personnel, and the establishments they work in, must also be safe. Some occupational safety and health (OSH) requirements must be carried out annually. Others' timing may vary based on events. The start of the new year is a good time to look at an overall list.

Lockout/Tagout Program

Employee Training: The circuit supervisor ensures through scheduled safety awareness training reviews that inspectors are familiar with lockout/tagout safety procedures. Training reviews should be conducted at the time of the annual periodic inspection of the energy control procedures that must be completed within the first quarter of the calendar year. (Refer to Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1, Part XIII.)

Retraining: The supervisor is responsible for providing retraining if that periodic inspection reveals, or the supervisor or IIC has reason to believe, that there are deviations from, or inadequacies in, the inspector's knowledge or use of the "Lockout/Tagout Safety Procedures" outlined in FSIS Directive 4791.11.

The supervisor is responsible for providing retraining if an inspector's job assignment(s) change(s), or if there are changes in machines, equipment or processes that present a new hazard, or if there is a change in the establishment's energy control procedures.

Hearing Conservation Program

The FSIS Hearing Conservation Program (HCP) includes inspection program personnel exposed to noise levels exceeding an 8-hour time-weighted average of at least 85 decibels are included.

Supervisors are to record noise levels at inspected establishments on FSIS Form 4791-20. Supervisors are to update the posted noise levels anytime the establishment makes a significant change in the process or layout of equipment. Annual updates are not required.

Within six months of exposure to high noise levels, all employees who are included in the HCP are to have a baseline audiogram which will be used to compare against subsequent audiograms to determine if a hearing loss has occurred. Baseline audiograms are provided during the initial onboarding process for employees who may be potentially exposed to high noise levels, as defined above.

All HCP employees are to complete annual hearing conservation training. Employees may complete the AgLearn course "Hearing Conservation" to fulfill this requirement. Supervisors are to make the training material available to all employees who do not have access to a computer or email. Other training material that may be used to satisfy the annual training requirement is available from the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist for the District. (Refer to Directive 4791.1, Part XIII.)

Conduct of Agency Workplace Inspections

Per Directive 4791.13, Safety and Health inspectors shall:

1. Review all pertinent background information including injury and illness logs, previous inspection reports, and reports of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions before beginning the inspection.
2. Comply with all OSH rules and practices.
3. Wear and use protective clothing and equipment.
4. Conduct inspections and investigations in a manner that does not unreasonably disrupt operations.
5. Consult with Agency employees, as needed, to make a thorough and effective inspection or investigation.
6. Provide the Official-in-Charge and recognized employee representative the opportunity to provide information about hazardous conditions.
7. Confer with the appropriate Official-in-Charge and recognized employee representative when the inspection or investigation is completed.
8. Complete the appropriate safety and health inspection checklist and other written reports as required to document inspection findings. Forward the checklist and reports to the appropriate supervisory official for review and action.
9. The circuit safety committee should conduct a safety walk-through at two establishments per year and record findings. (Directive 4791.13, PART TWO.)

SNAPSHOTS FROM

Crete, Neb.

On August 20, 2019, personnel from the Office of Policy and Program Development's (OPPD) Policy Development Staff toured Establishment (Est.) 717CR in Crete, Nebraska, a high-speed traditional swine slaughter facility, and Est. 46491, a modernized swine Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points Inspection Models Project (HIMP) plant located in Fremont, Nebraska. During the visits, the group was able to compare the roles and responsibilities of Office of Field Operations (OFO) inspection program personnel who work with the inspection systems.



OFO personnel from the Lincoln, Nebraska, Circuit led tours and discussed swine inspection with OPPD staff members. They gather for a photo at the conclusion of the tours. Pictured, from left: Scott Frickenstein, John Linville, Vincent Hill, Rachel Edelstein, Roberta Wagner, Angel Jepsen, Erin Strathe and Kevin Gillespie. Photo by Dr. Chelsea Buckley, OFO.



Marquette, Mich.

Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) Compliance Investigators James Lappin (pictured, front row, kneeling, second from left) and Clark McKimmy (pictured, back row, left), from the OIEA Compliance Investigation Division's (CID) Oak Park, Michigan, office, attended the 3rd Annual Midwest Regional Rapid Response meeting September 10-11. The event, hosted by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, also included representatives from the Food and Drug Administration and state agriculture agencies from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin.

The two-day event consisted of presentations and a tabletop exercise covering information and guidance for managing and controlling a multi-jurisdiction significant incident, such as a foodborne illness outbreak. McKimmy and Lappin gave a presentation about CID and answered questions about foodborne illness outbreaks. The meeting was an opportunity for FSIS employees to interact with partner agency personnel and train for interagency response to foodborne illness outbreaks and other significant threats. Photo by James Lappin and Clark McKimmy, OIEA.

THE FIELD

Biddeford, Maine

On September 26, Office of Field Operations Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSI) Julie Onesti (pictured, back row, second from right) and Lazarus Ofielo (pictured, back row, right), and Compliance Investigator Susan Isberg (not pictured) of the Office of Investigation Enforcement and Audit's Compliance and Investigations Division conducted outreach at the Walmart Superstore.

During the event, FSIS personnel provided food safety materials to customers and employees and answered numerous food safety questions. The customers were especially interested in cooking and cooling procedures and loved the food thermometers. Onesti and Ofielo demonstrated how to use the thermometers, and even got to try out their French, explaining the process (with a whole lot of gestures, smiles and laughter) to a group of visitors from Canada.



CSIs Julie Onesti (pictured, back row, second from right) and Lazarus Ofielo (pictured, back row right) pose with some happy visitors from Canada. Photo by Susan Isberg, OIEA.



Session 1: August Graduates

Pictured above, front row, from left: Leo Gallegos, Eric Murphy, Timothy M. Fields, Ashley Van Batavia, Jennifer Banach, Kendra Nicholas and Brittney Gaines. Pictured, second row, from left: Nancy Schmitt, Leigh Nichols, Olaya Valadez, Sheydanis Diaz Martinez, Amanda Lingenfelter and Shirley Scott. Pictured, third row, from left: Sherzada Falak, Scott Verhage, James Lott, Lynsee Melchi, Kelsea Job and Derrick Jones. Pictured, back row, from left: Detrick Black, Marvin Smithee, Brett Hanson, Cassie Rizzo, Adrian Abella and Brian Hineman.

Session 2: September Graduates

Pictured at right, front row, from left: Beth Danyi, Abbe D. Ames, Carole Dieterly, Amber B. Hodges, Yvette Keeler, Christine N. Nalli, Lisa S. Hindle and Valerie Gonzalez. Pictured, second row, from left: Tia Williams, Justeen Borrecco, Cheryl Stites, Leann M. Sargeant, Raven Canady, Ed Anhalt, Megan Ponce and Melanie Stewart. Pictured, back row, from left: Kurt Kreutzer, Joe Gomes, Jason Orlando, Colton Duxbury, Min Jae Kim, Rachel Wardlow, Kristen M. Leipzig, Erin Hogan and Colin Campbell. Photos by Thom Walsh, OEED.

Alexandria, Va.

Graduates of two 2019 New Supervisor Training Program (NSTP) sessions gathered for group photos after successfully completing their respective training sessions: August 5-16 for Session 1, and September 9-20 for Session 2. The program is geared towards new supervisors, and is ideally completed during their first 12 months as a supervisor.

The NSTP provides supervisors with training to gain knowledge about current practices and to maintain skills already developed. The training lasts two weeks and consists of interactive application exercises, presentations and lectures delivered by FSIS employees and external business partners.



FSIS issues notices and directives to protect the public's health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations.

- Notice 48-19, Performance Award Distribution for Non-Bargaining Unit Employees
- Notice 49-19, Eligibility of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to Export to the United States Poultry Products from Birds Slaughtered in China
- Notice 50-19, Annual Leave Donations to the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program
- Notice 51-19, Federal Holidays in Calendar Year 2020
- Notice 52-19, Federal Government Closure on Tuesday December 24, 2019
- Notice 53-19, Revisions Made to Public Health Information System Sample Questionnaires
- Directive 4791.16, Annual Attestation on Work-Related Conditions for Establishments Operating Under the New Poultry Slaughter Inspection System or the New Swine Slaughter Inspection System - Revision 1
- Directive 6410.4, Verifying Swine Slaughter Establishments Maintain Adequate Procedures for Preventing Contamination of Carcasses and Parts by Enteric Pathogens
- Directive 6420.2, Verification of Procedures for Controlling Fecal Material, Ingesta, and Milk in Livestock Slaughter Operations - Revision 2
- Directive 6600.1, New Swine Slaughter Inspection System: Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Inspection and Verification of Food Safety and Ready-To-Cook Requirements
- Directive 9510.1, Importation of Undenatured Inedible Meat, Fat, Rendered Fat, Poultry, Egg Products – Revision 1

New FSIS One Health Community: A Place to Learn and Share

By Dr. Kis Robertson Hale, OPHS

Phone: (202) 690-1215



One Health is a collaborative approach between professionals in multiple scientific disciplines — working locally, nationally and globally to optimize health in people, animals and the environment. The objective of One Health is to emphasize the need for professional and institutional diversity when combating complex health challenges. A

One Health perspective also helps public health professionals see how inextricably linked human health is to animal and environmental health, and why a holistic, systems approach is essential to prevention.

FSIS models One Health every day. Whether we're talking about inspection teams working together in a slaughter establishment or a team of chemists, microbiologists, epidemiologists and risk managers collaborating at headquarters, we are professionally diverse, and we are working on problems at the nexus of animal, human and environmental health. We regulate animal products that originate from farm environments and are then harvested in slaughter

environments; the resulting animal products are handled and consumed by people.

To promote awareness of how we all contribute to One Health in our day-to-day roles in the Agency, I invite all employees to join a new online community at: <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/FSISOneHealth> (VPN or eAuthentication required).

Employees will find timely and easy-to-read stories, recaps and descriptions about the latest science driving FSIS One Health forward. Trends in antimicrobial resistance and chemical residues, updates on foodborne outbreaks and information on foreign disease investigations pertinent to our regulated commodities are just some of the topics you will find.

Maybe you want to know more about the science behind new pathogen reduction policies. Or, maybe you want the scoop on interesting submissions to the Pathology Branch. Please join the community and discussion. I also want to hear from you if there are topics you would like me to address. I plan to post weekly, maybe more often, and I look forward to hearing from you and other employees across the Agency via the One Health online community platform.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name/Position	Duty Station	Years of Service	Name/Position	Duty Station	Years of Service
Benedict, Mark J., Prog. Analyst	Washington, D.C.	28	Murphy, Thomas E., Financial Prog. Spec.	Urbandale, Iowa	11
Borda, James T., Supv. Compliance Inv.	Philadelphia, Pa.	39	Reich, Thomas P., CSI	Everett, Wash.	41
Brookhouser, Gregory J., DDM	Ridgeland, Miss.	16	Passmore, Wynema D., CSO	Bothell, Wash.	20
Brown, Robin L., CSI	Thurmont, Md.	28	Cannonie, Roxanne M., CSI	Sidney, Ohio	19
Bryant, Beverly A., CSI	Gilroy, Calif.	19	Pingel, LeGrace R., CSI	Wittenberg, Wis.	32
Busby, Annie D., Resource Mgmt. Asst.	Dallas, Texas	42	Priddy, Sheila A., CSI	Springdale, Ark.	42
Cannonie, Roxanne M., CSI	Sidney, Ohio	19	Ricci, Gary J., CSI	Piscataway, N.J.	27
Clem, Michael D., FI-S	Dakota City, Neb.	25	Rice, Chester P., CSI	Louisville, Ky.	27
Cunningham, Beth P., DDM	Raleigh, N.C.	30	Ridlen, William L., CSI	Beardstown, Ill.	50
Custozzo, David J., Supvy. CSO	Saxonburg, Penn.	33	Rox, John J., CSI	Natchitoches, La.	43
Daniels, Frankie K., CSI	Springdale, Ark.	44	Scarborough, Lance K., CSI	Algona, Iowa	19
Diaz Diaz, Carlos A., SVMO	Carolina, Puerto Rico	35	Scott Wilson, Anita L., SVMO	Monroe, N.C.	33
Dixon, Sallee J., SVMO	Eugene, Ore.	18	Shipner, Richard N., SCSi	Chattanooga, Tenn.	44
Djalleta, Desalegn, CSI	Harleysville, Pa.	32	Steckel, Robert, CSI	Cassville, Mo.	34
Dua, Suresh K., SVMO	Mount Airy, Md.	41	Tabb, Mark A., Compliance Inv.	Sunrise, Fla.	18
Dulaney, Richard D., FI-PP	Marshall, Mo.	35	Taylor, Louella D., CSI	Farmerville, La.	35
Engel, Freddy G., CSI	Green Forest, Ark.	41	Townsend, Sylvia, CSI	Dillon, S.C.	18
Foster, Wanda S., Prog. Analyst	Beltsville, Md.	32	Unruh, Cynthia M., Resource Mgmt. Spec.	Springdale, Ark.	40
Gillespie, Kevin J., VMO	Omaha, Neb.	35	Watson Jr., Clarence, CSI	San Diego, Calif.	37
Grimes, Chae H., FI-S	Camilla, Ga.	11	WeHunt, Steven R., CSI	Cumming, Ga.	50
Haley, Vallie H., SVMO	Collins, Miss.	20	Willis, Larry E., FI-S	Norma, N.J.	30
Hoistion, James A., CSI	Agawam, Mass.	32	Zhang, Wenbing, CSO	Lombard, Ill.	17
Hughes, Bobby R., FI-S	Shelbyville, Tenn.	47	Zon Jr., Robert T., Sr. Compliance Inv.	Lombard, Ill.	37
Idris, Umelaalim A., SVMO	Athens, Ga.	15	Zuck, Donald S., FI-Imports	Miami, Fla.	33
Kelso, Janey N., SVMO	Benton, Ky.	28			
Larson, Jerry J., FI-S	Marshall, Minn.	15			
Martin, William D., CSI	Batesville, Ark.	39			
McGriff, Alan L., CSI	Goodlettsville, Tenn.	47			
Montgomery, Sheila K., FI-S	Chapel Hill, Tenn.	27			

...Continued from page 4

Faces of Food Safety

Republic. Between 1985 and 1990, he held a job as a petroleum inspector (a consumer protection position) with the Bureau of Petroleum Inspection/Division of Standards with the Florida Department of Agriculture. From 1990 to 1991, Frontera completed a one-year internship at Iowa State University, a requirement for foreign veterinary graduates. After completing the requirement, he practiced large animal medicine in eastern Iowa, where he also worked in partnership with APHIS on the eradication of infectious diseases like pseudorabies (Aujeszky's Disease) in swine herds. During a continuing education meeting in 1993, Frontera met an FSIS representative who shared information about USDA, APHIS and FSIS veterinary careers. While in private practice, Frontera had indirectly worked with APHIS, but did not have any prior knowledge of FSIS. He applied to a job in the Raleigh Area Office (as it was called at the time) and began a completely different approach to his veterinary career. The next year, he joined FSIS as an SPHV and has had no regrets.

Off Duty Interests

Together with Aurora, his wife of 35 years, Frontera has two daughters and three grandchildren, whom he constantly reminds about food safety. He and Aurora enjoy traveling along eastern North Carolina, visiting communities and experiencing their local traditional foods, as well as occasionally traveling abroad. He also enjoys fishing and waterfowl (duck and goose) hunting.

FSIS Hosts Employee Engagement Best Practices Forum

By Greg DiNapoli and Lula Wallace, OEED

Phone: (202) 725-6453

On November 5, 2019, the Employee Engagement and Recognition Staff hosted four senior leaders from three federal agencies who shared how they improved employee engagement in their organizations. Fifty-two FSIS employees attended the forum in person and via webcast.

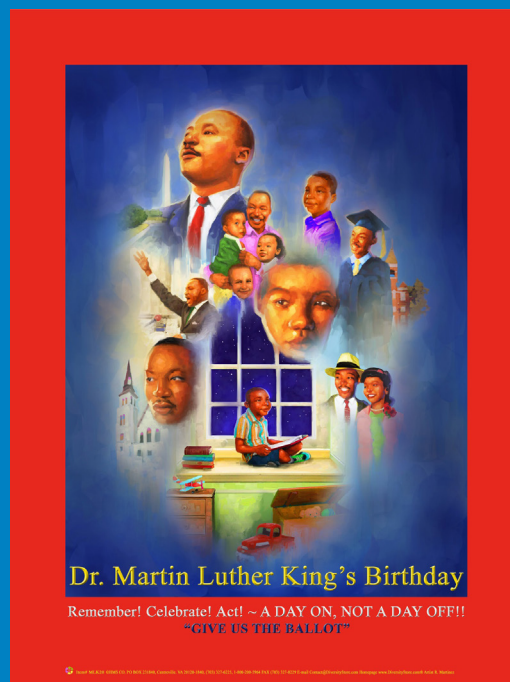
The speakers shared practical ways supervisors and employees can be engaged in what they do. One way to integrate everyone's voice into the work is by ensuring bold, open and frequent multi-directional communications. Another is to develop ways to make everyday activities into opportunities for engagement and recognition. This could be as simple as organizing a lunchtime walk, creating a rising star award or providing career development information. A third is to emphasize formal and informal leadership excellence and develop trust in the organization. Improved engagement results from consistent commitment to work in real time, improve every day, and adapt to grow.

Soumaya Tohamy, assistant administrator for the Office of Employee Experience and Development (OEED), encouraged supervisors to let employees know that they rely on employee feedback to shape the direction of their offices.

A recording of the forum is available at: <https://fsistraining1.fsis.usda.gov/medialibrary/110519-818536-USDA-FSIS-Building.mp4>.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS OBSERVANCE

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is a federally legal holiday that is observed on January 20. This holiday serves as time for Americans to reflect on the principles of racial equality and nonviolent social change.



...Continued from page 1

FSIS Success in FY 2019 and Actions in 2020

Collaborating

Two long-term collaborative efforts yielded solid results for FSIS. To ensure the safety of food produced using cell-culture technology, FSIS and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) established a joint regulatory framework for foods derived from the cells of livestock and poultry. By leveraging both the FDA's experience regulating cell-culture technology and living biosystems and USDA's expertise in regulating livestock and poultry products for human consumption, the framework uses each agency's strength to do the most good for the American public. Also, in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FSIS began using Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) as the primary characterization tool for *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and *E. coli* in meat and poultry. WGS technology allows for efficient identification of pathogens, greatly helping with traceback, classification and other tasks related to learning about and fighting foodborne illness.

Priorities in FY 2020

Ongoing modernization activities planned for FY 2020 include exploring improvements to beef slaughter inspection and proposing performance standards for *Salmonella* in raw pork cuts and raw comminuted pork products. Another is to revise performance standards for *Campylobacter* in comminuted chicken and turkey products.

FSIS will also work to finalize rules that were proposed in 2019, including expanding Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point principles to egg products. FSIS developed a plan in 2019 to expand tests of all FSIS regulated beef products for non-O157 Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli*. FSIS will propose this testing and request comments on the plans before finalizing them in FY 2020.

The Agency will continue to make decisions based on sound science and inform these decisions with data. This includes how FSIS sets goals and determines what steps should be taken to achieve these goals.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

By Dr. Regina Salter, OIEA

Phone: (614) 204-9289



September 17-19, 2019, USDA employees staffed a booth at the London, Ohio, 57th Annual Farm Science Review. This event is Ohio's largest agricultural show and featured more than 4,000 commercial product lines and over 700 commercial and educational exhibits, and offered workshops, presentations and demonstrations to approximately 114,000 attendees.

During the event, FSIS Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit Compliance Investigator Regina Salter (pictured, left) was joined by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Officer Heidi Kennedy, and a staff member (not shown) from U.S. Customs & Border Protection and answered food safety-related questions and questions about the invasive species killing the trees in Ohio, respectively.

...Continued from page 2

Spotlight

expertise, epidemiological traces of animals and animal products, and responds to disease outbreaks and animal welfare concerns. Dr. Keith Gilmore, a former Office of Field Operations executive associate for regulatory operations now with the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit recalled that, "in 2018 and 2019, tabletop discussions about foot and mouth disease and African swine fever resulted in greater understanding of timelines and details for each agency's response to an outbreak and continued monitoring efforts."

Dr. Sheryl Shaw came from APHIS to be director of the FSIS Office of Public Health Science Applied Epidemiology Staff. She is a liaison to APHIS, answering scientific and policy inquiries. "Over the years, OPHS has worked to enhance communication at the leadership and staff levels to address all interests," Shaw said. "This partnership is a continuum – live animals are regulated and handled by APHIS, slaughter and processing regulated by FSIS, and APHIS' Veterinarian Services program staff certify the animal products' and by-products' health status for export." Initiatives such as preharvest food safety assessments can help prevent foodborne illness by identifying and reducing risks in the farm-to-table continuum. APHIS acts as the lead agency for epidemiological assessment, while FSIS is actively engaged in meetings and activities to discuss how practices can affect slaughter and pathogen contamination.

Shared import and export responsibilities ensure the safety of meat and poultry products, flocks and livestock. Import eligibility for a foreign country must be reviewed by both FSIS and APHIS. Animal health status of the region of origin, risk determination and mitigation for U.S. animal health and agriculture are just a few APHIS responsibilities, while FSIS responsibilities include ensuring export eligibility for meat processed by an FSIS-regulated facility and determining the equivalency of the food safety inspection system of a country requesting to export regulated products to the United States. Through collaborative efforts and agency-specific methodologies, the 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week dedication demonstrated by APHIS and FSIS supports agricultural safety and the safety of the nation's food supply.

To learn more about APHIS, visit their website at www.aphis.usda.gov.



RECALLS AND PUBLIC HEALTH ALERTS

December 10	South Carolina firm recalls approximately 55,013 pounds of frozen, not ready-to-eat breakfast burrito products that may be contaminated with extraneous materials, specifically pieces of plastic.
December 13	A public health alert was issued due to a Canadian firm importing chicken soup products that were misbranded and contained an undeclared allergen.
December 18	Canadian firm recalls approximately 4,365 pounds of veal and lamb products that were not presented for import re-inspection.
December 19	California firm recalls approximately 21,930 pounds of Siluriformes products that were not presented for import re-inspection and ineligibly imported into the U.S. from Thailand.
December 20	Illinois firm recalls approximately 1,092 pounds of pork sausage products that may be contaminated with extraneous materials, specifically hard dark plastic.
December 20	Ohio firm recalls approximately 15,739 pounds of ready-to-eat beef patty products that may be contaminated with extraneous materials, specifically plastic.
December 30	Minnesota firm recalls approximately 136 pounds of ready-to-eat salad products, containing meat, that were misbranded and contained an undeclared allergen.
For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls .	

Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) allows federal employees to donate annual leave for use by other federal employees who are experiencing a personal or family medical emergency. To be considered for assistance via the VLTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work due to the medical emergency for which they are applying to the VLTP program; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in serious financial hardship for the employee because he/she has insufficient accrued leave to cover the absence; 4) submit a completed Form AD-1046, provide a personal statement and a signed medical document that explains the medical emergency and the duration of the medical emergency; and 5) have the Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor.

Please ensure Form AD-1046 is complete and medical documentation is provided so as not to delay receipt of the decision notification. For assistance, contact PayAndLeaveGuidance@usda.gov.

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the Federal Occupational Health's (FOH) Worklife4You Program are valuable tools in helping employees balance their work and home life and manage life issues as they arise. FSIS employees and their families may contact the EAP and Worklife4You, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for free and confidential assistance and referral services for help with relationship, family, emotional, and alcohol or drug issues, to name a few. FOH offers several other services.

Call 1-800-222-0364 (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go to www.FOH4you.com or www.worklife4you.com for more information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.