

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS NOTICE

03-25

1/21/25

AVAILABILITY OF FSIS GUIDELINE FOR RETAINED WATER

I. PURPOSE

This notice provides instructions for inspection program personnel (IPP) to notify meat and poultry establishments that an updated guideline for retained water is now available. This guideline provides formulas and examples for calculating retained water in products and recommendations to ensure the retained water protocol (RWP) provides accurate data for labeling determinations.

II. BACKGROUND

A. On January 17, 2025, FSIS issued its *Revised Guideline for Retained Water*, which was announced in the *Federal Register* ([90 FR 5809](#)),

B. FSIS revised the guideline to provide more detail on one of the sample size calculator examples. In addition, it clarified which processes and products are subject to [9 CFR 441.10](#). FSIS also added its step-by-step process for how it determined the correct formulas when using moisture percentages. FSIS has provided additional clarification on arithmetic errors in establishment RWP reviews. In addition, FSIS provided additional information on how establishments may address statistical variability.

C. The guideline provides formulas to correctly calculate the retained water in products, information on determining appropriate sample sizes, and guidance on analyzing and drawing conclusions based on that information.

D. If revisions are needed to RWPs after reviewing the guideline, meat and poultry establishments that produce products with retained water will have until March 3, 2025 to submit their revised protocols to the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) via [askFSIS](#) for review. Establishments will have until January 1, 2026, to make any necessary changes to retained water statements on their labels.

E. On October 1, 2025, the Office of Field Operations will start reviewing RWPs, instead of OPPD. FSIS will issue a revised directive prior to October 1, 2025.

III. IPP RESPONSIBILITIES

A. If a meat or poultry establishment applies water or aqueous solutions to products as part of their process, IPP are to share and make establishment management aware of this new guidance document at the next weekly meeting.

B. IPP are to be aware that this document is guidance, not requirements. IPP are to make compliance determinations based on the regulatory requirements.

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic

NOTICE EXPIRES: 2/1/26

OPI: OPPD

C. IPP are to inform establishment management that:

1. The revised FSIS *Guideline for Retained Water* is available on the FSIS website at <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/guidelines/2024-0002>:
2. The establishment will have until March 3, 2025, to submit its revised protocols, if revisions are needed after reviewing the guideline, to OPPD via [askFSIS](#) and that the establishments will have until January 1, 2026, to make any necessary label changes.
3. The guidance is focused on the needs of small and very small meat and poultry establishments, although large establishments can also benefit from the information in the guidelines.
4. The guideline provides information to help meat and poultry establishments comply with the relevant regulatory requirements in [9 CFR 441.10](#).
5. IPP are to document this discussion in a Memorandum of Interview (MOI) following the instructions in [FSIS Directive 5010.1](#), *Food Safety Related Topics for Discussion During Weekly Meetings with Establishment Management*.

V. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this notice to your supervisor or as needed to the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) through [askFSIS](#), or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935. When submitting a question, complete the [web form](#) and select **New Technology** as the Inquiry Type.

NOTE: Refer to [FSIS Directive 5620.1](#), *Using askFSIS*, for additional information on submitting questions.



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