



Food Safety and Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

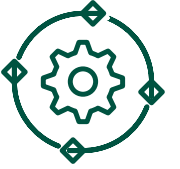


Planning RLM or IVT Sampling

What do I do Now?

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FSIS, OPPD, RMIS

Steps to Sampling



- Plan ahead and stay organized!
- Contact the in-plant inspection team.
- Schedule the date for sampling and order supplies
- Notify plant management.
- Assemble a team.
- Conduct Entrance Meeting with the establishment.
- Take walk through, consider where and what to sample.
- Organize sampling supplies.
- Collect/ Submit samples.

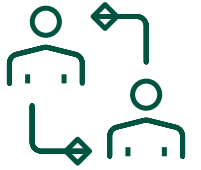
Contact IPP – prescheduling planning.



Example questions for IPP/FLS;

- What is the establishment size?
- How many RTE lines do they utilize?
- What RLM or IVT eligible products are produced?
- What are their RTE production processes, e.g., is brine or a PLT utilized, are they freezing, drying, fermenting, etc.?
- What are the production schedules of those products?
- How are the products packaged, e.g., size?
- Is the establishment Kosher? (DE broth is not Kosher.)
- What is the FSIS and establishment sampling history?
- What issues have they had? What concerns do you have?
- Consider FedEx. Pick up or drop off? When and where?

Scheduling a Sampling Date with FSIS Labs



At least 2 weeks prior to the week of sampling, submit a proposed collection date by sending an email to the correct address in Outlook:

For Rlms:

manually enter **RLMSampleScheduling@usda.gov**
or search using “**FSIS - RLm Sample Scheduling**”

For IVTs:

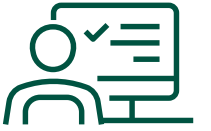
manually enter **IVTSampleScheduling@usda.gov**
or search using “**FSIS - IVT Sample Scheduling**”

Ordering Supplies



- Ordering supplies and requesting a sampling date are done simultaneously.
- Attach a questionnaire to your email.
- Use prompts to ensure all necessary information is included;
 - Proposed collection date and shift.
 - Number of sample units required.
 - Designated field laboratory.
 - Establishment number.
 - Your contact information (cell).

Ordering Supplies



Prompts continued;

- Physical location to send supplies;
 - Can be office, home, or the establishment
 - **Supplies must be checked on day of receipt.**
 - Refrigerate pre-moistened swabs and/or broth upon delivery for long term storage.
 - Can be held at room temperatures for short term
 - Must ensure no temperature abuse.
- Requests for special supplies;
 - Consider product package size ahead of scheduling. Are more or larger shipping containers needed?
 - Is a kosher broth needed?
 - Are brine sampling supplies needed?

Receiving the Supplies



- Supplies are typically mailed within a few days of the lab's emailed confirmation of a sampling date.
- If supplies are not received, inquire by resubmitting the lab confirmation response and a copy of the questionnaire back to the appropriate mailbox.
- If you receive the supplies, but did not receive everything you need, reply to the lab's confirmation response ASAP to tell them what you're missing.

Notifying Plant Management



- For IVTs
 - provide 48 hours advance notice or enough time to hold product, but not enough time to change practices.
- For RLms
 - provide one-week advance notice.

Assembling the Team



- Identify team members. May include FLS or FSIS in-plant personnel.
- Assign roles to team members.
- Possible team member roles;
 - Team Leader/ Sample Collector (EIAO).
 - Sample Collector Assistant (CSI, PHV, IIC, FLS, etc.).
 - Forms Assistant – complete and double check forms, pack, and prepare samples for shipment.

Entrance Meeting at the Establishment



Review the “Entrance Letter to Establishment Management” with plant personnel;

- RTE product, food contact, and environmental samples will be collected.
- Production lot(s) must be held.
- Equipment does not need to be rinsed after each sample is taken because Dey Engley (*DE*) broth is considered *GRAS*.
- Most negative results are published within 3 days.
- A RTE product lot is usually defined as all product produced from clean-up to clean-up.

Entrance Meeting at the Establishment



- Reconfirm that the establishment will be producing post-lethality exposed, RTE product on the day that the IVT or RLM sampling has been scheduled.
- Ask the establishment if there have been any changes to its documented production, sanitation, or food safety practices.
- Ask where records are held (e.g., HACCP and sampling records).

At the Establishment



- Take a “walk through” with plant management to familiarize and help develop a sampling plan.
- Be knowledgeable of the establishment’s GMPs and operational SSOPs so you don’t break their rules.
- Review the establishment’s Listeria sampling program and previous results.
 - What sites have previously tested positive?
 - Are samples being collected as required?
 - Are all possible FCS sampling sites represented?
 - Are samples and supplies being handled, stored, and shipped appropriately?

Establishment Walk Through



- Identify RTE areas and determine which products are processed in each area;
 - Processing
 - Cooking
 - Packaging
 - Coolers and/ or freezers
 - Related RTE storage areas
 - packaging supply storage
 - Ingredient storage
 - finished product storage coolers or freezers
- Scope out possible Listeria harborage areas, e.g., hard to clean areas with a source of moisture.

Determine Where You Might Sample



- Identify possible sampling sites.
- Think through a general sampling plan, i.e., where and when.
- Allow for flexibility.
- Final sample site selection should be based on your knowledge, experience, **and** your observations.
 - Areas that are difficult to clean and sanitize, e.g., behind shields, cracks, crevices, floor-wall junctions, drains, etc.
 - Surfaces with a lot of employee contact.
 - Employee behavior at time of sampling.
 - Movement of people, equipment, and supplies at time of sampling.
 - Moisture, condensation, drips, etc., at time of sampling.

Pre-Sampling Preparation



- Final double check to ensure that you have everything needed for sampling.
- Begin “staging” sampling supplies and templates.
- Organize using your sampling template sheets.
- Determine how you will store the samples before shipping, i.e., secure and refrigerated.
- Double check Fed-ex logistics.
- Discuss team members roles/responsibilities.
- Possibly practice aseptic technique and swabbing with your team.

Sampling Template Example

Establishment Name/ Number		RLMCONT	Line #	Date
1	Sample Set # sticker	Time	Room	Laboratory Form #
		Description of Sampling Site		
2	Sample Set # sticker	Time	Room	Laboratory Form #
		Description of Sampling site		
3	Sample Set # sticker	Time	Room	Laboratory Form #
		Description of Sampling Site		

RLm Sampling Est. 0000 / ABC Food Corp

RLMCONT Line 1 / Packing

#	Date	Time / Shift	Room / Line	Laboratory Form #	Sampling Site Description	Type of Sample	Sample Seal #	
1	03/13/07	Pre-op	Packing / 1	11000243	Splitter blade	CONT	632831	
2		Pre-op	Cooler / 1	11000244	Probe thermometer # 1	CONT	632832	
3		0900 hr	Packing / 1	11000245	Pack room cutting table	CONT	632833	
4		0900 hr	Packing / 1	11000246	Bagger flaps	CONT	632834	
5		0900 hr	Packing / 1	11000247	Splitter table	CONT	632835	
6		1145 hr	Cooler / 1	11000248	Probe thermometer # 4	CONT	632836	

RLm Sampling Est. 0000 / ABC Food Corp RLMENVC Line 1 / Packing

#	Date	Time / Shift	Room / Line	Laboratory Form #	Sampling Site Description	Type of Sample	Bar code label #	
21	03/13/07	Pre-op	Packing / 1	11000263	Packing room drain scraper	RLmENVC	632891	
22		0900 hr	Packing / 1	11000264	Packing room wash hose	RLmENVC	632892	
23		0900 hr	Packing / 1	11000265	Packing room electric switch	RLmENVC	632893	
24		1150 hr	Packing / 1	11000266	Packing room refriger. unit	RLmENVC	632894	
25		1330 hr	Packing / 1	11000267	Packing room door	RLmENVC	632895	

RLm Sampling Est. 0000 / ABC Food Corp RLMPROD Line 2 / Slicing

#	Date	Time / Shift	Room / Line	Laboratory Form #	Sampling Site Description	Lot Number	Bar code label #	
35	03/13/07	1130 / 1st	Slicing / 2	11000275	Sliced Roast Beef	4384	632903	
36	03/13/07	1145 / 1st	Slicing / 2	11000276	Sliced Roast Beef	4384	632904	

Collecting Samples



- Some samples may be collected at pre-op., but most should be collected during production, during breaks if possible.
- Establishment must be producing FSIS amenable product. Must be post-lethality exposed for RLM sampling.
- With justification, you may sample a line that is not currently being used.
 - Notate this on sampling sheets.
 - Inform the lab before samples arrive that no product samples will be submitted with the unit.

Collecting Samples



- Each unit of samples should all be associated with a single line, a single lot, and a single production Alternative.
- Can collect samples anywhere FSIS, RTE products or equipment are processed or held (coolers, hallways, production rooms).
- If the number of FCSs is very limited, then sample those same sites at different times throughout the day of production.
 - Each sample is just a snapshot in time.
 - The timing of your sample collection may be important.

Collect the Samples



- Generally, collect samples closest to the product first and move out.
- Generally, collect NFCS samples from areas closest to processing lines, but you can possibly sample in other areas (drains, coolers, freezers, storage).
- Can sample hands, gloves, aprons, etc.
 - May be FCS or NFCS, depending your observations.
- Briefly notate and justify sampling locations for future reference.

Brine Samples



- Collect one brine sample per unit or line (depending on number of brine chillers in use).
- If the casing is **permeable or semi-permeable** then the brine is considered a food contact surface (FCS) sample.
- If the casing is **impermeable** then the brine is considered a non-food-contact surface sample (NFCS).

Summary



- Pre-planning and organization are essential parts of the RLM or IVT sampling processes.
- A team approach is recommended.
- Team member roles should be well-defined, prior to the start of sampling.
- Effective communication with both plant management and team members is critical throughout the entire process.

Questions ??

fsis.usda.gov

