

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

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# FSIS NOTICE

25-19

8/13/19

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## DIOXIN SURVEY FOR DOMESTIC FARM-RAISED AND WILD-CAUGHT SILURIFORMES FISH

### I. PURPOSE

This notice informs inspection program personnel (IPP) assigned to federally inspected Siluriformes fish processing establishments that the Dioxin Survey for Siluriformes fish will gather data about dioxin levels in farm-raised and wild-caught United States (U.S.) Siluriformes fish. Public Health Veterinarians (PHVs), as designated by their District Offices (DOs), and IPP will complete the sampling task described in this notice. Sampling will be assigned and conducted under the DIOX\_FI project code.

### II. BACKGROUND

IPP are to refer to FSIS Notice 60-18, *Update to the Sampling Instructions for the Fiscal Year 2018 Dioxin Survey*, for background information on the FY 2018 Dioxin Survey.

### III. REFERENCES AND REVIEW OF MATERIALS

Upon issuance of this notice, IPP at Siluriformes fish processing establishments and the PHVs designated to collect samples for the FY 2019 Dioxin Survey at Siluriformes fish processing establishments are to become familiar with the information provided in this notice and the following FSIS issuances:

[FSIS Directive 7355.1](#), *Use of Sample Seals for Laboratory Samples and Other Applications* and

[FSIS Directive 13,000.2](#), *Performing Sampling Tasks in Official Establishments Using the Public Health Information System*.

### IV. AWARENESS MEETING WITH ESTABLISHMENT MANAGEMENT

A. Upon issuance of this notice, the Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) at an establishment that is a primary processor of Siluriformes fish is to conduct an awareness meeting with establishment management to inform them of the Dioxin Survey. For establishments that process fish, a “primary processor” refers to an official establishment that produces products made from fish NOT previously inspected by FSIS.

B. The IIC is to advise establishment management that it is eligible for and may be selected for sampling under this project code. If the establishment is selected for sampling:

1. Sample collection will begin on or after September 9, 2019;

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**OPI:** OPPD

2. The PHV will collect samples from 2 whole fish. The samples will be collected from one side of each fish from an area that extends from the back bone to the belly with a combined sample weight totaling approximately ¼ to ½ pound (100-200 grams);
3. As part of the sampling task, IPP will collect and record all information pertinent to the fish, including farm information and pond number, if available. If wild-caught, the IPP will include the fishery company that caught the fish and any other information available from the establishment as to the location where the fish was caught, i.e., name of a river and State;
4. Fish selected for sampling under this project do not need to be held pending the reporting of test results; and
5. Sample results for the Dioxin Survey will not be reported through the Public Health Information System (PHIS) but will be posted to the FSIS website as aggregate data once the project is completed.

## **V. SAMPLE TASK ASSIGNMENT**

A. IPP will receive Dioxin Survey sample requests through PHIS with the sampling project code **DIOX\_FI**.

B. The sample request will appear in PHIS as a sampling task on the establishment task list. When IPP receive notification that the task has been added to the task list, the IPP is to contact the DO and request that a PHV be assigned to collect the sample. The assigned PHV is to coordinate with the IPP to schedule the sampling task on the task calendar. The PHV is to work with the DO to ensure that a sharp knife and cut-resistant glove are available for sample collection.

C. Once the PHV has collected the sample, the IPP is to complete the task in PHIS and pack and ship the sample once it is frozen (see Section VIII of this notice).

D. The IPP and PHV will have 30 days from the date of the sample request (sampling window) to collect and ship the sample to the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) laboratory. After this 30-day window has closed, the task will no longer be available on the task list.

## **VI. SAMPLING SUPPLIES FOR THE DIOXIN SURVEY**

A. Approximately one week before the sampling task appears on the task list, the IIC will receive the Dioxin Survey sampling supplies, which will be labeled “ARS-Special Project.” If supplies do not arrive within one week of the scheduled Dioxin Survey sample date for the establishment, the PHV or IIC is to contact the FSIS Midwestern Laboratory (MWL) via e-mail using the following e-mail address:

[FSIS – Sampling Supplies – Midwestern Lab.](#)

The e-mail is to include the establishment name and number, PHV or IIC name and phone number and the laboratory project code, “ARS Special Project”.

B. The shipping container will contain the following supplies:

1. FSIS Laboratory Sample Container Seal (FSIS Form 7355-2A/2B);

2. Absorbent pad/paper towel;
3. Cardboard separator(s);
4. Gel pack(s);
5. 1-pair of gloves;
6. 1000 ml glass jar with Teflon-coated lid;
7. Bubble wrap to protect the glass jar;
8. Rubber bands;
9. 10"x12" zipper lock plastic bag for shipment of glass jar containing fish sample;
10. Plastic sleeve for sample form; and
11. FedEx Billable Stamp.

**Figure 1 - Sampling Supplies for the Dioxin Survey for Siluriformes Fish**



C. If any of the supplies listed above are damaged or missing from the shipping container, IPP are to contact the MWL using the instructions provided in Section VI.A. of this notice.

D. If the sampling task has been scheduled on the task calendar but cannot be completed within the sample collection window, IPP are to cancel the sampling task. IPP are to follow the instructions provided in [FSIS Directive 13,000.2](#) for deleting or cancelling sampling tasks.

E. IPP are to return any unused shipping containers and sampling supplies for this project, including the ARS Laboratory FedEx Billable Stamp, to the MWL. IPP are to send a request to the MWL for a pre-addressed return FedEx ground shipping bill using the e-mail address

provided in Section VI.A. of this notice.

## VII. COLLECTING THE SAMPLE

A. The IPP is to refer the establishment to the information in the attachment to this notice, titled, "Information for Establishments on the Dioxin Survey for Siluriformes Fish" prior to sample collection.

**NOTE:** Low levels of dioxin are often present in the environment.

B. When collecting the sample, the PHV is to prevent contamination of the glass jar and sample collection equipment, as this may affect the test results.

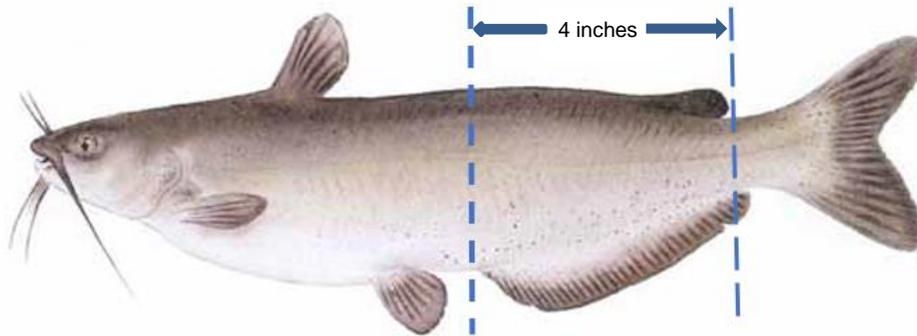
1. The PHV is **not** to use paper towels and is **not** to wipe gloved hands or knife with paper towels. Paper towels may be contaminated with dioxin and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).
2. The PHV is **not** to open the glass jar until immediately before collecting the sample. The PHV is to transfer the tissue samples directly from the fish to the glass jar provided and close the glass jar immediately.

C. If the establishment does not allow glass in the production area, the PHV is to transfer the collected sample from the fish onto an acceptable clean and dust-free material, such as a stainless-steel container or aluminum foil, transport the sample to an acceptable area in the establishment and place it in the glass jar. The PHV is to exercise caution to ensure that the sample does not become contaminated during this process.

**NOTE:** Do not use plastic or paper to transfer the sample.

D. The PHV is to randomly select 2 whole fish for sampling that appear healthy. The PHV is to collect the sample following evisceration of the fish. To collect the sample, the PHV is to:

1. Affix the barcoded label to the glass jar;
2. Wash and sanitize hands and knife before collecting samples. Do **not** wipe the knife with paper towels;
3. Don the gloves provided with the sampling supplies using aseptic technique;
4. From each of the 2 fish, collect a skin-on fillet measuring approximately 4 inches wide (as measured from the tail area) that extends from backbone to belly on one side of each fish. This will result in a sample consisting of two fillets and weighing a combined total of approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound (100-200 grams). Collect the sample with the skin on;



5. Place the 2 skin-on fillets in the glass jar and close the lid immediately. Be sure that the lid is tightly seated on the glass jar. Place the bubble wrap around the glass jar and secure it with rubber bands to protect the glass jar;
6. Place the closed glass jar containing the two fillets that has been wrapped with bubble wrap in the freezer and freeze contents thoroughly for a minimum of 8 hours or overnight. Place all the gel packs provided with sample supplies in the freezer; and
7. Maintain sample security during collection, freezing, and shipping.

### **VIII. HOW TO COMPLETE THE SAMPLING TASK AND SHIP THE SAMPLE**

- A. The IPP is to follow the instructions provided in [FSIS Directive 13.000.2](#) for completing sampling tasks in PHIS and [FSIS Directive 7355.1](#) on the use of sample seals (FSIS Form 7355-2A/2B) to maintain sample security and identification.
- B. The IPP is to obtain all information pertinent to the fish, including farm information and pond number, if available, and enter it into PHIS when completing the sampling task. If wild-caught, the IPP is to obtain information on the fishery company that caught the fish and any other information available from the establishment as to the location where the fish was caught.
- C. Following freezing of the sample, the IPP is to pack and ship the sample as follows:
  1. Remove gel packs and shipping container from the freezer. Place the absorbent pad, in the shipping container;
  2. Remove the glass jar containing the sample from the freezer. Remove the bubble wrap, apply the barcoded label to the glass jar and rewrap the glass jar with the bubble wrap. Ensure that the glass jar and printed form have a barcoded label affixed. Do not remove the glass jar from freezer until the sample is ready to be packed and shipped;

**NOTE:** The sample must be shipped frozen to the lab.

3. Place the completed form in the plastic sleeve provided;
4. Test the glass jar lid to assure it is securely closed to prevent leakage. Place the bubble wrapped glass jar and sample form in the 10"x 12" zipper lock and seal the zipper closure. Apply the barcoded Sample Identification Label (FSIS Form 7355-2B) on the zipper lock bag;

5. Place the bagged glass jar in the shipping container as shown in Figure 2. Place the gel packs on opposite sides of the glass jar, with the cardboard separators placed between the gel packs and the glass jar;

**Figure 2 - Shipping Container Showing Placement of Sample Jar and Gel Packs**



6. Complete and sign the FSIS Laboratory Sample Seal (FSIS Form 7355-2A) and apply it to the shipping container, using the instructions provided in [FSIS Directive 7355.1](#); and
7. Ship overnight to the USDA-ARS Biosciences Research Laboratory in Fargo, ND, using the FedEx Billable Stamp provided. The shipping address for the laboratory is:

Sara Lupton  
USDA-ARS-Biosciences Research Lab  
1616 Albrecht Blvd  
Fargo, ND 58102-2765  
Phone: 701-239-1236

**NOTE: Do not ship samples on a Friday or the day before a Federal holiday.**

## **IX. SAMPLE RESULTS REPORTING**

Sample results for this project will not be posted in PHIS. Upon completion of the Dioxin Survey, FSIS will summarize and publish the survey results as an official report which will be accessible on the FSIS website. The report will present a summary of findings on a national basis. Individual establishment results will not be published.

## **X. DATA ANALYSIS**

ARS and FSIS will analyze the data collected under the Dioxin Survey and use these data to detect and identify possible sources of dioxin in the food supply and determine whether regulatory actions by FDA and EPA are warranted.

## XI. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this notice to the Office of Policy and Program Development through [askFSIS](#) or by phone at 1-800-233-3935. When submitting a question, use the **Submit a Question** tab, and enter the following information in the fields provided:

Subject Field: Enter **Notice 25-19**.  
Question Field: Enter question with as much detail as possible.  
Product Field: Select **General Inspection Policy** from the drop-down menu.  
Category Field: Select **Sampling-General** from the drop-down menu.  
Policy Arena: Select **Domestic (U.S.) Only** from the drop-down menu.

When all fields are complete, press **Continue** and at the next screen press **Finish Submitting Question**.

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert J. Wagner".

Assistant Administrator  
Office of Policy and Program Development

## Attachment

### Information for Establishments on the Dioxin Survey for Siluriformes Fish

- The Dioxin Survey for Siluriformes Fish began on September 9, 2019, as a Tier 2 project under the U.S. National Residue Program to gather information on dioxin levels in Siluriformes fish. Tissue samples will be collected in federally inspected establishments and the survey data will be used to determine the dioxin levels in Siluriformes fish.
- This study will include farm-raised and wild-caught Siluriformes fish processed in federally-inspected establishments.
- Samples will be packaged and shipped to the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) laboratory in Fargo, ND, for analysis.
- ARS will report analytical findings to FSIS upon completion of the analyses.
- In general, FSIS will not report laboratory results back to establishments on a sample-by-sample basis. Establishments are not required to hold product pending laboratory results for samples collected under this survey.
- FSIS will notify any establishment within approximately 6 weeks from the time that an initial sample is taken if there is any reason for an investigation, such as a test result significantly different from background dioxin levels. If an establishment is not contacted by FSIS for additional information about the sampled fish, the establishment can assume that further investigation will not occur.
- In the event of a very high dioxin test result or an unusual finding, FSIS will work with FDA and EPA to seek additional information about the sample and the fish from which that sample was taken, conduct an investigation, and consider other actions to identify possible sources of dioxin coming into the food chain. If sources can be identified, FSIS will take steps to see that further dioxin inputs into the food supply are stopped. It is very unlikely that the Agency will recommend a recall based solely on a dioxin finding.
- The survey results will be presented in a publicly available final report summarizing the survey findings and characterizing the general dioxin levels in U.S. Siluriformes fish. Individual establishments will not be identified, and all participants will receive a copy of the final report.
- If you have questions about the Dioxin Survey, please refer them to the Office of Policy and Program Development by phone at 1-800-233-3935 or through [askFSIS](#). When submitting a question, use the **Submit a Question** tab, and enter the following information in the fields provided.

Subject Field: Enter **Notice 25-19, Dioxin Survey for Siluriformes Fish**.

Question Field: Enter question with as much detail as possible.

Product Field: Select **General Inspection Policy** from the drop-down menu.

Category Field: Select **Sampling – General** from the drop-down menu.

Policy Arena: Select **Domestic (U.S.) Only** from the drop-down menu.

When all fields are complete, press the **Submit** button.