



FSIS Releases Retail *Listeria monocytogenes (Lm)* Pilot Project Fourth Update

The week of Jan. 25, 2016, FSIS launched a year-long pilot project to assess whether retailers are using the recommendations from the June 2015 "FSIS Best Practices Guidance for Controlling *Listeria monocytogenes (Lm)* in Retail Delicatessens," (FSIS Retail *Lm* Guidance). FSIS has decided to extend the pilot project until the end of Fiscal Year 2021 as part of the FSIS Strategic Plan FY 2017-2021. Under the Strategic Plan, FSIS will track whether retailers are following eight of the most important recommended actions identified in the FSIS Retail *Lm* Guidance. These eight recommendations include:

- Is any visibly adulterated product present in the retail deli?
- Did you observe any ready-to-eat (RTE) meat or poultry products not refrigerated promptly after use?
- Are any RTE meat or poultry products prepared, held or stored near or directly adjacent to raw products in the deli case or elsewhere in the deli area?
- Are all opened RTE amenable products covered, wrapped or otherwise protected to prevent cross-contamination when not in use?
- Are insanitary conditions present where RTE products are prepared, packed or held?
- Is the RTE equipment cleaned and sanitized at least every four hours?
- Are there facility conditions in the deli area or storage area that could cause the product to become adulterated?
- Do RTE deli employees wear disposable gloves?

During the 4th Quarter of the project (Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, 2016), FSIS surveyed 469 retail delis compared to 480 in the third quarter (July 1-Sept. 30, 2016). Retailers followed 88% of product handling recommendations (87% in Q3), 82% of cleaning and sanitizing recommendations (81% in Q3), 98% of facility and equipment controls recommendations (97% in Q3) and 96% of employee practices recommendations (95% in Q3).

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Policy Updates

FSIS notices and directives on public health and regulatory issues are available at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulations>. The following policy updates were recently issued:

Notice 04-17 - *Assessment and Verification Reviews of An Official Livestock Establishment's Robust Systematic Approach Plan For Humane Handling and Slaughter*

Directive 4280.1 - *Student Employment Program*

Directive 7120.1 Rev. 39 - *Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products*

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Export Requirement Updates

The Library of Export Requirements has been updated for the following countries:

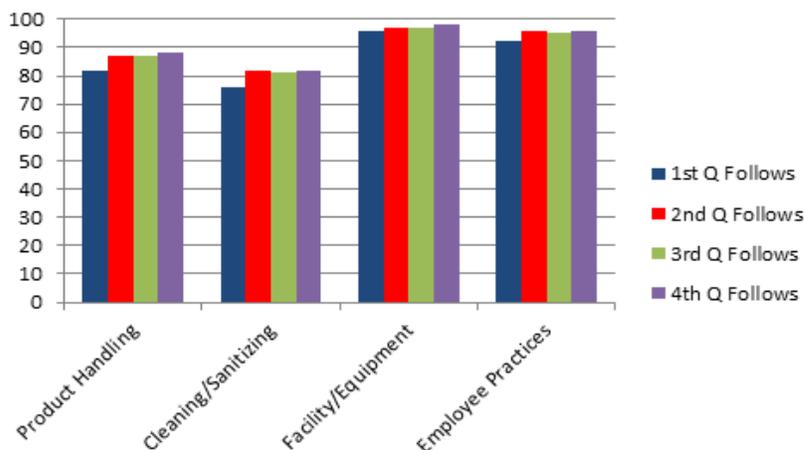
- Brazil
- Japan

For a complete list of countries, visit <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/international-affairs/exporting-products>.

...FSIS Releases Retail

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The chart shows the percentage of recommendations that retailers followed in the 1st Quarter (results in blue), 2nd Quarter (results in red), 3rd Quarter (results in green) and 4th Quarter (results in purple).



Retailers can refer questions regarding the *Lm* pilot project to the Risk, Innovations and Management Staff through askFSIS or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935. When submitting a question, retailers should use the 'Submit a Question tab' and enter "Retail *Lm*" in the subject field.

Establishment Specific Pasteurized Egg Product Sampling Data Available

FSIS has posted the next set of establishment specific datasets on the FSIS website as announced in the *Federal Register* on July 14, 2016 (Docket No. FSIS-2014-0032). This is the full dataset of FSIS' routine microbiological sampling of Pasteurized Egg Products. Prior to publishing this dataset, the sample dataset and corresponding data dictionary were posted on Nov. 18, 2016 and comments were sought until Dec. 30, 2016. Going forward, FSIS will update existing datasets quarterly approximately the first Friday of the next quarter, so the datasets will next be updated in April.

Additional details can be found at <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portallfsis/topics/data-collection-and-reports/data>.

FSIS Constituent Update is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Staff, Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

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Label Backlog Update and Tip for Plants to Reduce the Time Needed for FSIS to Review and Approve Labels

The Labeling and Program Delivery Staff (LPDS) in FSIS is currently experiencing a 34 - 36 business day backlog in label evaluation for labels that require FSIS review prior to use.

Below is a summary of the label backlog, reported in number of days from receipt in the Label Submission and Approval System (LSAS) to evaluation by LPDS.

12/9	33-37 days
12/16	32-34 days
12/23	30-35 days
12/30	33-35 days
1/6	35-37 days
1/13	34-36 days

Despite lack of improvement in label evaluation turnaround time, LPDS has noticed a steady decrease in the overall number of labels submitted each week since we began issuing tips in the *Constituent Update*. As more tips are published and establishments continue to adopt these label submission tips, a continued decrease in label volume will result in a faster label turnaround time in the weeks ahead. LPDS will continue to assess whether the label submittals are adopting the label submissions tip published in the *Constituent Update*. Adopting these tips will help ensure the turnaround time will improve. As mentioned in previous weeks, our targeted turnaround time is 15 days.

While evaluating labels, LPDS Staff Officers have noticed many applications are submitted with incorrect or missing information from the "Special Claims Information" section, Step 3 in the Electronic LSAS process and Box 10 on the paper FSIS Form 7234-1. When establishments identify special statements and claims appearing on the label in the application sections noted above, LPDS Staff Officers are able to view this information quickly, without opening the application, in a summary listing of all labels in the labeling queue. This enables each Staff Officer to select labels to evaluate based on his or her area of expertise. Clear identification of special statements and claims in Step 3 (LSAS) and Box 10 (paper) allows Staff Officers to focus their efforts on evaluating and approving labels rather than spending unnecessary time partially evaluating a label only to find that the label bears a special statement or claim that they cannot evaluate.

If an industry representative submitting a label is unsure of whether or not certain language on the label is considered a special statement or claim, he or she may select the "Other Claims" box and manually enter the claim into the text box, such as "Humanely Raised" or "American Kobe." Providing this additional information enables LPDS Staff Officers to quickly select and evaluate label applications that are best suited to their expertise.

FSIS will continue to provide weekly updates regarding the label turnaround time, as well as suggestions to assist industry to streamline their label submissions. Below is a link to the "User Guide for Industry Users." This document provides guidance on how to use LSAS. Page 83 specifically provides information on the tip cited above. Please visit <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/45a29f18-52cc-4012-8790-ab7ea9f980c9/LSAS-Industry-User-Guide-063015.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>.

Food Recalls and Alerts

For information regarding recalls, please contact the Congressional and Public Affairs Staff at (202) 720-9113. You can also receive e-mail notifications when public health alerts and recalls are issued by registering at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/subscribe>.

FSIS Extends Comment Period for Guidance on Date Labeling to Reduce Food Waste

FSIS recently issued updated information on food product labeling, including new guidance aimed at reducing food waste through encouraging food manufacturers and retailers that apply product dating to use a “Best if Used By” date label. The initial comment period was scheduled to close 60 days from the day it was posed in the Federal eRulemaking Portal on Feb. 7, 2017. FSIS is extending the comment period an additional 30 days until March 7, 2017 to provide interested parties additional time to comment on the revised guidance.

Comments may be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov or by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, FSIS, Docket Clerk, Patriots Plaza III, 355 E St. S.W., 8-163A, Mailstop 3782, Washington, DC 20250-3700. All comments submitted must include Docket Number FSIS-2016-0044.

UPDATE: FSIS Testing for *E.coli*



FSIS posts biweekly updates of the Agency's raw ground beef *E. coli* sampling program, which includes testing results of raw ground beef component samples for *E. coli* O157:H7 and Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STECs) from FSIS routine and follow-up sampling programs. Data are also presented for non-O157 STECs by each non-O157 STEC serogroup.

Between June 4, 2012 and Jan. 8, 2017, FSIS laboratory services analyzed a total of 16,228 beef trim samples (13,908 domestic and 2,320 imported), 3,745 routine follow-up samples (3,631 domestic and 114 imported) and 327 non-routine follow-up/traceback samples. One-hundred eighty samples were found to be positive. 107 were domestic trim samples, six were imported trim samples, 63 were domestic follow-up samples and four were non-routine follow-up/traceback samples. To date, three samples have been positive for both O157:H7 and at least one non-O157 STEC strain and ten samples have been positive for two different non-O157 O-groups. To review testing results, visit the *E. coli* data tables at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/data-collection-and-reports/microbiology/ec>.