

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

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<b>FSIS NOTICE</b>	35-12	5/25/12
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**NEW CONTAINERS FOR USE WHEN COLLECTING RAW BEEF SAMPLES FOR  
*ESCHERICHIA COLI* (STEC) TESTING**

**I. PURPOSE**

This notice provides new instructions to inspection program personnel (IPP) to use Whirl-Pak™ bags displaying a fill-line for collecting samples of ground beef, beef manufacturing trimmings, bench trim, and other raw ground beef components for Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) testing. STEC testing includes *E. coli* O157:H7 testing and non-O157 STEC testing that will begin June 4, 2012, for beef manufacturing trimmings. All procedures for collecting samples are the same as current procedures, except this notice includes instructions that IPP are to use the new Whirl-Pak™ bags and use 3 bags instead of 2. Two attachments are included with the notice. Attachment 1 includes diagrams that illustrate how to use the new Whirl-Pak™ bags. Attachment 2 shows the supplies used for N60 sampling.

**II. BACKGROUND**

After issuing new instructions for collecting N60 samples on 3/31/10, FSIS collected information on the weight and number of pieces included in the N60 samples sent to the FSIS laboratories by field personnel. FSIS found that the number of pieces or weight of the sample was often incorrect. To ensure that all samples are the necessary weight and to facilitate sample collection, FSIS is instructing IPP to use 3 Whirl-Pak™ bags displaying a fill-line to facilitate sample collection for raw ground beef, beef manufacturing trimmings, and bench trim.

**III. USE OF WHIRL-PAK™ BAGS**

For raw ground beef components, IPP are to use the Whirl-Pak™ bag (following the instructions below), but the fill line will not apply. When sample collection is completed, each bag will hold the equivalent of 325g of product. For beef manufacturing trimmings, each bag will hold 30 pieces. The laboratory will analyze the contents of one or two bags and hold a third bag as a reserve in case of a need to conduct additional analysis on positive samples. IPP are to use only the laboratory supplied Whirl-Pak™ bags for submitting these samples.

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**DISTRIBUTION:** Electronic

**NOTICE EXPIRES:** 6/1/13

**OPI:** OPPD

#### **IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE FILL-LINES ON THE WHIRL-PAK™ BAGS WHEN COLLECTING RAW GROUND BEEF, BEEF MANUFACTURING TRIMMINGS, AND OTHER COMPONENTS SAMPLES**

A. With the issuance of this notice, IPP are to follow the instructions in FSIS Directive 10,010.1, Verification of Activities for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7 in Raw Beef Products, Ch. II., III. and IV., except for the amount of ground beef product collected and Ch. II., IV., B., 9., placing 60 pieces in a Whirl-Pak™ bag. IPP will receive Whirl-Pak™ bags in the supply boxes. Therefore, all procedures for collecting samples are the same as current procedures, except IPP are to use the new Whirl-Pak™ bags and use 3 bags instead of 2. IPP are to collect sufficient product to fill the three provided Whirl-Pak™ bags up to the fill-line indicated on the bag. IPP are not to under fill or over fill the bag. See section IV. of this notice for information on how to request the new Whirl-Pak™ bags for sampling.

B. When sampling beef manufacturing trimmings or bench trim (when applicable), IPP are to collect 30 pieces that are 3 inches long by 1 inch wide and 1/8 inch thick in 2 Whirl-Pak™ bags, up to the fill line, for a total of 30 pieces in each of the first 2 bags. In addition, IPP are to collect available smaller pieces of beef manufacturing trimmings or bench trim from the same specific production lot and place this product in the third Whirl-Pak™ sample bag.

C. When collecting only smaller pieces of bench trim for a grab sample, IPP are to place the smaller pieces in each of the 3 bags. Measuring to the fill line in this case is not necessary. IPP do not need to cut or trim the additional pieces. IPP may just grab smaller pieces. For the third bag, IPP are to collect pieces with as much surface area as possible. IPP need not count the pieces for the third. When the bag is closed, the product should meet the line indicated on the bag (see Attachment 1).

D. When sampling raw ground beef components other than trim, IPP may need to cut the other components (e.g., head and cheek meat, weasand, and heart) into smaller pieces to fit into the Whirl-Pak™ bags, but the fill-line does not apply to these products. For these components, continue to follow FSIS Directive 10,010.1 as written and ensure at least 2 inches of space remains in the top of the Whirl-Pak™ bag to avoid overfill and leakage incidents.

E. IPP are to carefully squeeze out the air remaining in the bag and tightly fold over the top at least four times as trapped air and loose seals may lead to leakage. IPP are to fold over the side tabs to secure the folds in place and not tie the ends. These steps will ensure a successful sample collection process and decrease the number of sample discards.

F. IPP are to place all 3 Whirl-Pak™ bags in a secondary containment bag and seal following FSIS Directive 7355.1, Use of Sample Seals for Laboratory Samples and Other Applications.

G. IPP are to push the foam plug of the shipping container down firmly against the sample and frozen gel pack to keep the sample and supplies in place during shipment

and to help maintain the temperature of the sampled product. IPP are to ensure that the FedEx stamp placed on the shipping container matches the requesting FSIS laboratory listed as item 5. in the Collection Information block on the submission form (PHIS Form 8000-18).

## **V. REQUESTING SAMPLING SUPPLIES**

A. IPP are to request Whirl-Pak™ bags when needed. IPP are to request supplies via e-mail at least 1 week before sampling is to begin. Routinely, the FSIS laboratories will send sampling boxes with supplies included (e.g., Whirl-Pak™) to IPP in the field for sampling. IPP are to e-mail any of the three FSIS laboratories by using one of the following e-mail addresses:

1. FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Eastern Laboratory;
2. FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Midwestern Laboratory; or
3. FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Western Laboratory.

B. IPP are to include the following information in the supply request e-mail:

1. The exact supplies needed;
2. Establishment address (not a P.O. Box); and
3. Establishment phone number.

C. For N60 sampling tools, send an Outlook message to “FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Western Laboratory” and request the specific supply items that you need, making sure you indicate that you need the items for the N60 sampling program (Attachment 2).

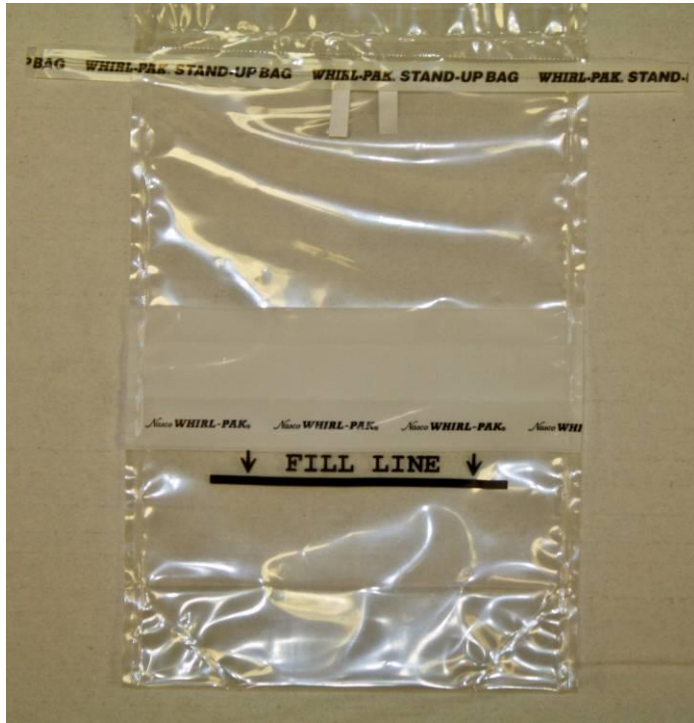
## **VI. TECHNICAL QUESTIONS**

Direct all technical questions to the Policy Development Division and all sampling questions to Risk, Innovations, and Management Division at 1-800-233-3935 or submit your question through *askFSIS* at <http://askfsis.custhelp.com>



Acting Assistant Administrator  
Office of Policy and Program Development

## Supplies – Proper Filling and Closing of Fill-line Whirl-Pak™ Bag Sampling



- a. Remove the tear strip from the top and pull apart the two small white tabs to open the bag. The interior of the bag is sterile so be careful not to touch the inside.



- b. The bag has a gusseted bottom so once product is added it will stand upright.



c. Carefully squeeze out the air remaining in the bag as trapped air may lead to leakage.



d. Tightly fold over the top at least four times.



e. Fold over the side tabs to secure the folds in place. Do not tie the ends.

IPP are to collect sufficient product to fill the three provided Whirl-Pak™ bags up to the fill-line indicated on the bag. The sample request forms should be completed per instructions for PHIS, and the samples packaged and shipped in accordance with Directive 7355.1, Revision 2.

Make sure that the FedEx stamp placed on the shipping container matches the requesting FSIS laboratory listed on the submission form.

### **N60 Beef Trim Sampling Supplies**

A plastic caddy, sharp boning knife, hook, forceps, sterile gloves, plastic bags, and three Whirl-Pak™ bags are needed for N60 sampling of boneless beef trim. It is critical that the knife used for sampling be kept clean, sharp, and properly steered for collecting samples. Also available from the FSIS laboratories are sampling templates, cut resistant mesh gloves, and Whirl-Pak™ bags. The new fill-lines on the Whirl-Pak™ bags will allow the collector to visually assess the number and size of sample pieces being collected and to achieve the targeted 60 pieces of 1 x 3 inch of trim.





**Sampling Caddy, Clip, Bag, Knife Boning Hook, Template and Steel**

The improvement in the collection kit is the addition of fill-lines on the Whirl-Pak™ bags that allow collectors to better assess the physical quality of the sample being submitted.

The total weight of the sample of boneless beef trimmings submitted to the FSIS field laboratories will still be approximately 2 lbs. of product.



**Sampling Template, Steel, Boning Knife, Mesh Glove, Forceps & Boning Hook**

Sixty pieces of trim will still be cut from 60 different pieces of beef trim. Each of those pieces will be cut to a size of approximately 1 inch wide by 3 inches long.



A short boning hook may be more useful to manipulate and secure large, heavy pieces of trim than a standard meat inspection hook. The standard meat inspection hook also can be used and is more useful for anchoring and repositioning smaller pieces of trim.





**Using Forceps to Grasp Smaller Pieces of Beef Trim**

Rat toothed forceps can also be helpful to grasp smaller trim pieces.



**Using a template to measure the pieces of beef trim**

It is important that the strips of boneless beef trim be kept very thin and that only the surface of product is submitted for analysis. Lightly scoring two parallel lines approximately an inch apart and 3-4 inches long on the surface of a piece of trim may facilitate stripping off the appropriate width and length piece of surface area from each section of beef trim selected for sampling.

Laboratory-supplied materials and shipping supplies should arrive ahead of time, but to request additional N60 sampling supplies for this project, please send an Outlook message to “**FSIS - Sampling Supplies –Western Laboratory**” and request the specific supply item(s) for the N60 sampling program.