

Small Plant NEWS

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Small Plant NEWS

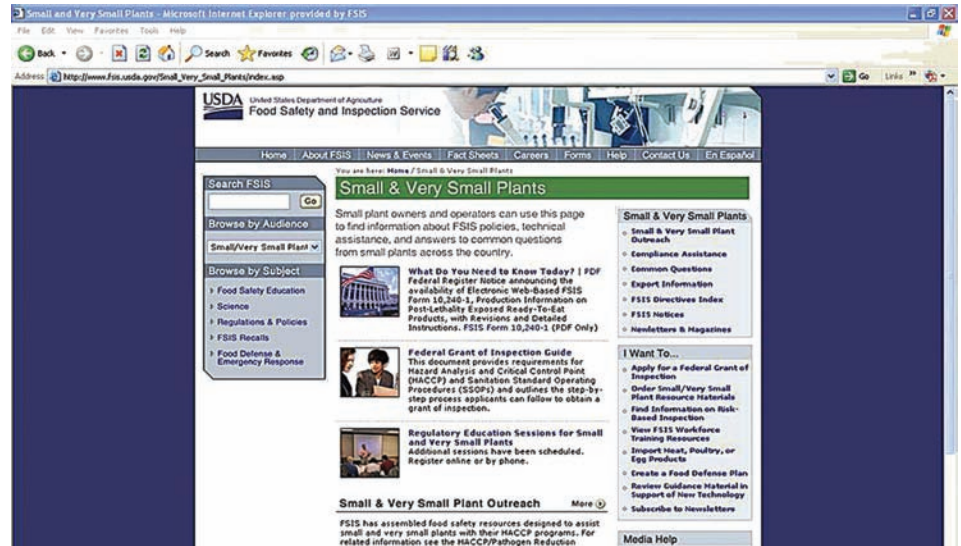
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FSIS Launches New Web Page Designed for Small and Very Small Plants

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has added one more way to stay informed about small and very small plant issues with the launch of a Web page dedicated to these establishment categories.

A working group with representatives from different FSIS offices developed this page to address one of the key action items included in the FSIS Strategic Implementation Plan for Strengthening Small and Very Small Plant Outreach.

The new Web page covers topics such as current food safety resources, regulatory policies, contact information, compliance guidelines, common questions and export information. It also covers FSIS directives and notices, newsletters and magazines. One highlight is a feature titled "What Do You Need to Know Today?" which

will change often to answer some of the questions most frequently asked by small and very small plant owners and operators.

Seven task-oriented links to hot topics and important resources for small and very small plants are also included.

These links allow users to order small and very small plant resource materials, find information on food safety inspection, view FSIS workforce training resources, create a food defense plan, review guidance material in support of new technology and subscribe to newsletters and other publications.

The user-friendly page is accessible from anywhere on FSIS' Web site. Click on the Small & Very Small Plants page, which is located in the left column under the pull-down tab for "Browse By Audience."

Federal Grant of Inspection Guide Available Online

The Small/Very Small Plant Guide – Applying for a Federal Grant of Inspection for Meat and Poultry Establishments is now available online at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Grant_of_Inspection_Guideline/index.asp.

This comprehensive guide was developed to aid those who are contemplating applying for a Federal grant of inspection.

The guide describes the seven basic steps required for obtaining Federal meat and poultry inspection, including:

- 🏠 Filing application for inspection;
- 🏠 Meeting regulatory

performance standards at your facility;

- 🏠 Obtaining approved labels;
- 🏠 Obtaining an approved water source letter;
- 🏠 Obtaining approved sewage system letter;
- 🏠 Providing a written standard operating procedure for sanitation; and
- 🏠 Providing a written Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point plan.

District offices can also provide either a hard copy or electronic version of the guide to every prospective

applicant. For additional inquiries, district office personnel will be able to assist prospective plant owners with the application process. The guide also provides an extensive list of agency contacts, technical resources and regulatory references. The Federal regulations are also provided and are referenced throughout the document.

The guide is featured on FSIS' Small & Very Small Plants and Businesses & Partners Web pages. Click on either of these links, which are located in the left column under the pull-down tab for "Browse By Audience."

Further inquiries can be made at (202) 690-6520.

Protecting Consumers from BSE: How to Remove Specified Risk Material

How do operators of slaughter and processing facilities go about removing specified risk materials (SRMs) from cattle carcasses? FSIS is pleased to make available a new DVD, which provides operators of small, very small, and custom-exempt slaughter and processing facilities detailed guidance on how to comply with agency regulations concerning removal of SRMs.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, under a cooperative agreement with FSIS, developed this training and reference guide titled "Specified Risk Material, Identification, Removal and Disposal." The DVD provides diagrams and other references as well as a 17-minute video providing a step-by-step, hands-on demonstration on how a typical, very small facility removes SRMs and complies with the regulations.

SRMs are inedible and cannot be used in human food. They must be removed from edible portions of carcasses because they carry a higher risk for transmitting the infectious agent (i.e., prion) associated with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). SRMs include the brain, skull, eyes, trigeminal ganglia, spinal cord, dorsal root ganglia, and vertebral column (excluding the vertebrae of the tail, the transverse processes of the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, and the wings of the sacrum) in cattle 30 months of age and older; and the tonsils and distal ileum in all cattle regardless of age. This prohibition is a public health measure that applies to all facilities that slaughter and process cattle for human food use.

The SRM requirement is one of three control measures FSIS first imposed on beef slaughter and processing over

3 years ago to protect the public from BSE. After the U.S. government confirmed in December 2003 that an imported cow had BSE, FSIS quickly published, on January 12, 2004, emergency interim rules to protect public health from potential BSE-contaminated animal tissues.

In addition to identifying SRMs as inedible and ineligible for human food, FSIS also prohibited the use of non-ambulatory disabled cattle (aka "downer" cattle) for human food. Non-ambulatory disabled cattle have a significantly higher rate of BSE infection than healthy cattle, based on studies conducted in Europe, and if offered for slaughter must be condemned and prevented from being slaughtered for use as human food. Other control measures included the prohibition on the use of high-pressure stunning devices because such pressure-driven devices can translocate SRM tissues into edible tissues.

The final version of the SRM rule, which closely resembles the interim final rule, was published in the Federal Register on July 13, 2007, and will become effective October 1, 2007. Of note, there are new requirements related to the removal of the spinal cord from carcasses during the slaughter operation. Also, there are new record keeping requirements related to the handling and removal of the vertebral column from beef loins if the bone-in product is shipped to another Federal establishment for further processing to remove the SRMs.

For more information on the final rule or to obtain a copy of the DVD, "Specified Risk Material, Identification, Removal and Disposal," call (202) 690-6520 or send a fax to (202) 690-6519.

askFSIS at www.fsis.usda.gov

FSIS now has *askFSIS*, a new web-based feature, designed to help plant owners and operators get answers to technical and policy questions 24 hours a day. More information

about this innovative feature will be in the November 2007 issue of *Small Plant News*. For assistance concerning *askFSIS*, send an e-mail to askFSIS@fsis.usda.gov.

Food Safety Resources

A wealth of food safety information is available to small and very small plants just for the asking. Find out what is available by looking at the FSIS Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov or at the Food Safety Resource brochure that was mailed to establishments in January. This brochure contains a list of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems-related materials as well as food defense topics. Most materials are available in both English and Spanish.

Nearly 1,000 requests have been processed already with more arriving every day. The top five most requested items include:

1. HACCP - The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (Video)
2. HACCP - Plant Implementation and Records Management (Video)
3. HACCP Self-Study Training Package (Video and booklet set)
4. Process Validation Workshop (Three-tape video set and booklet)
5. Supporting Documentation Materials for HACCP Decisions (Ohio State University publication)

Requesting materials is easy. Simply fax the order form found on the brochure to (202) 690-6519 or complete an online version of the form and send it to FoodSafetyResources@fsis.usda.gov.

The online form can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/HACCP_Resources_Order_Form/index.asp.



Education Sessions

Small and very small plant owners and operators are invited to join FSIS inspection personnel at regulatory education sessions to bring industry and inspection personnel together to promote a uniform understanding of the regulations. Online registration forms are provided at www.fsis.usda.gov. To register by phone, call 1-800-336-3747.

Briefs

FSIS Posts *Listeria monocytogenes* Compliance Guideline for Small and Very Small Meat and Poultry Plants

FSIS posted on its Web site a guide to assist small and very small plants with the implementation of strategies to control *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) in ready-to-eat products. The guide is titled, *Summary of Listeria monocytogenes Compliance Guideline for Small and Very Small Meat and Poultry Plants that Produce Ready-to-Eat Products*. It also contains practical recommendations developed from an analysis conducted on food safety assessments in small and very small plants that had product that tested positive for *Lm* by FSIS. The guide can be viewed on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov.

Public Health-Based Inspection Updates Available by E-mail

FSIS has added Public Health-Based Inspection System to its e-mail subscription service. This service will alert customers about information and resource materials in support of public health-based inspection. The e-mail alert service provides automatic and customized access to specific

food safety news and information. Customers who subscribe will be notified via e-mail when updates have been made. To subscribe, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Email_Subscription/index.asp.

Podcasting

Coming soon! FSIS will soon make available audio clips on topics of interest. These audio clips can automatically be sent to your computer or portable music player every time a new episode is available. Stay tuned for more information concerning this new way of communicating important FSIS messages.

Resources Spotlight

Beginning with the next issue of *Small Plant News*, a different food safety resource will be highlighted in every issue. The spotlight will describe the resource and indicate how to obtain a copy.

Feedback Requested

Please let us know your thoughts about this first-of-its-kind newsletter specifically targeted to small and very small plants. Please send your comments to SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov or call (202) 690-6520.

FSIS To Host Web Seminars

F SIS is reaching out to small and very small plants through four Web seminars during the third and fourth quarters of 2007.

This initiative was developed by the Outreach Task Force, comprised of representatives from each FSIS program area and directed by Executive Associate Dr. Karlease Kelly. The task force has been working on creating ways to streamline access to important regulatory information and improve its delivery to the owners and operators of small and very small plants.

These meetings follow up on last year's Regulatory Education Sessions. The 2-hour sessions were given across the United States, and were held at night or on weekends so plant owners or employees were free to participate without having to miss work.

Recent Web seminars have covered topics such as FSIS compliance guidelines for the production of safe meat and poultry jerky products, and controlling *Salmonella* in small and very small plants that produce raw poultry products.

Future seminar topics include an update on the new rule related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and specified risk materials removal, basic sanitation procedures, new technology and labeling.

Call (202) 690-6520 to obtain more information about previous and upcoming seminars; or to register, go to the following Web page: www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp.

Editorial Column

Committed to Outreach in More Ways Than One

One of the most important responsibilities of Federal agencies that deal with safety issues—whether food or aviation—is to keep the greater public aware of important developments that can eliminate hazards and improve life. USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service uses a wide range of technologies to inform and educate, such as an interactive telephone hotline and Web site, printed materials, and regular communication with the public through mass media.

We also have a responsibility to you, the industry we regulate. FSIS ensures safe meat, poultry and processed egg products in nearly 6,000 plant locations around the country as well as at each port of entry for foreign foods that fall under our jurisdiction. Even more surprising is that over 90 percent of these plants are considered small or very small businesses.

Over the past two decades the communication emphasis has increasingly been on electronic information through computers and the Internet. There certainly is a tendency to think that everyone is reachable through some electronic means.

Well, an interesting thing happened here recently.

First, some background. There are about four dozen FSIS formal food safety-related documents pertaining to virtually every conceivable plant situation—from controlling *Salmonella* bacteria to preventing mad cow disease. Of course, most of the publications discuss the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, or HACCP, the gold standard for food safety. The documents have been bundled into a small brochure titled "Food Safety Resources."

The brochures were mailed to every address in FSIS' directory of plants offering any or all of the regulatory and scientific material without any charge or handling fees. All respondents had to do to get information was mail or fax in their request to us and provide their company name, address and phone number.

Our mailing yielded a success rate eight times greater than the industry average, which is a 1 percent return on every 100 mailings. More importantly, in excess of 10,000 FSIS food safety documents were mailed out to recipients, many of whom requested everything in the brochure, which also included food defense materials.

The success of a single mailing demonstrated to us that we may be living in an electronic world but sometimes paper is indispensable. We plan future mailings to reach this important target market. If, for some reason, you're a small business owner who did not receive our invitation to a wealth of food safety information, then you can order online at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/HACCP_Resources_Order_Form/index.asp

The old-fashioned way works, too, by simply calling (202) 690-6520 and requesting the brochure or additional information.

We've also enhanced and customized the pages on our Web site devoted to small business at www.fsis.usda.gov/Small_Very_Small_Plants/index.asp and we are producing this new newsletter specifically targeted to small and very small plants that will be mailed directly to you.

Sometimes an issue is so intractable that we need to be walked through the answer by another knowledgeable voice. Industry can also get answers to FSIS-related questions by calling our Policy Development Division at (800) 233-3935.

All these options demonstrate our commitment to be accessible in as many formats as possible because ensuring food safety is one of the most vital services FSIS can provide.

Commonly Asked Question & Answer

Q. Am I required to document SSOP and HACCP corrective actions on the NR, or do I have to write them on my company record?

A. The requirement in 9 CFR 416.16 and 417.3(c) is that you document Sanitation SOP and HACCP corrective actions.

The establishment can document these corrective actions on its records or on the NR. If the documentation is on the NR, the NR becomes part of the HACCP or Sanitation SOP records and is required to meet the recordkeeping requirements of those regulations.