

An Introduction from the District Manager

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is responsible for inspecting meat, poultry and egg products for safety, wholesomeness and proper labeling. Inspection program personnel (IPP) are present at all times in egg products plants and virtually all slaughter establishments during production operations and at least part of each production day in establishments that further process meat and poultry products. The purpose of this introduction document is to broaden your knowledge of the FSIS inspection program and the requirements in applying for and receiving a Federal Grant of Inspection.

Red meat inspection became law under the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906, which requires inspection of red meat products sold in interstate and foreign commerce. The Act established sanitation requirements for facilities and requires a review of all finished product labels for truthfulness and accuracy. In 1968, the Poultry Products Inspection Act extended the same provisions to poultry inspection. The Egg Products Inspection Act was amended in 1997. Under the Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products Inspection Acts, FSIS inspects all amenable meat, poultry, and processed egg products sold in interstate commerce.

Federal inspection assures the consumer that meat, poultry and egg products are clean, safe, and wholesome for human consumption at the time of purchase. In meat and poultry establishments, this involves ante-mortem inspection of the live animal; post-mortem inspection of the carcass and internal organs; and inspection of the facilities, equipment, personnel, transportation and records.

In 1996, FSIS issued the Pathogen Reduction Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) final rule. As the name implies, there are two components to the 1996 rule: the reduction of pathogens and the development and implementation of a HACCP system. Today, all federally inspected meat and poultry establishments are operating under a HACCP system. Egg Products plants are not under the HACCP system at this time. All new establishments must have developed a HACCP food safety system that is reviewed by IPP prior to receiving a grant of inspection. The individual that develops an establishment's HACCP plan, conducts a reassessment and modification to the HACCP plan, shall have successfully completed a course of instruction in the application of the seven HACCP principles to meat or poultry product processing. HACCP allows an establishment to identify food safety hazards reasonably likely to occur in the production process and identify the preventative measure the establishment can apply to control those hazards. IPP verify an establishment has developed and fully implementing and documenting HACCP system performing as designed.

The HACCP final rule also requires the development and implementation of Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (Sanitation SOPs). This program is intended to prevent contamination or adulteration of exposed product or a direct food contact surface. The program focus is on pre-operational and operational activities. Every establishment must develop, implement, and maintain effective Sanitation SOPs. FSIS has developed generic HACCP and Sanitation SOP plans to aid prospective applicants in developing these required components. You may access this information from the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov

In a red meat or poultry slaughter establishment, the inspection process starts with receiving the

live animal. [Ante-mortem inspection](#) involves a visual and physical evaluation of the live animal prior to slaughter to identify any conditions that may indicate disease or illness. [Humane handling](#) of an animal is a primary concern of FSIS while the animal is on the inspected premises. Humane handling practices are strict guidelines that are in place and are strongly enforced to prevent the mishandling of animals. FSIS IPP are responsible for conducting a thorough examination of all slaughtered animals. [Post-mortem inspection](#) allows inspection personnel to further evaluate the health of a carcass and parts.

The inspection system continues throughout the further processing operation until the finished packaged product is shipped. IPP are responsible for verifying that an establishment is maintaining sanitary conditions, implementing and maintaining all food safety related procedures, and labeling regulations. Meat and poultry production is the most highly regulated food industry. FSIS is responsible for providing regulatory oversight during the day-to-day production of red meat and poultry products. This is to ensure each federally inspected establishment is operated and maintained in a manner sufficient to prevent the creation of insanitary conditions and to ensure that product is not adulterated.

As you begin the process of applying for a Federal Grant of Inspection, FSIS personnel at [District Office \(DO\) Locations and phone numbers](#) throughout the United States, the labeling division and Headquarters in Washington, DC and the FSIS Policy Development Division (PDD) in Omaha, NE are available to assist you with the application process or to answer any questions regarding HACCP or Sanitation SOP regulatory requirements.

The combination of both FSIS along with the commitment and dedication of you, the establishment owner/operator, will uphold consumer expectations and confidence to purchase a safe meat or poultry product. Food safety begins with the establishment, follows with regulatory verification, and ends with the consumer. We look forward to assisting you with the application process and working together to produce a safe, wholesome meat or poultry product.