



Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

USDA Introduces *Mobile Ask Karen*, Food Safety on Your Smartphone

FSIS is launching *Mobile Ask Karen*, a web-based smartphone application that instantly answers food safety questions. The application is a mobile version of the existing *Ask Karen* website, a virtual food safety representative who offers advice about properly handling, storing and preparing food to prevent illness.

“FSIS has a wealth of tips and useful information to help as you shop, prepare and store food,” said Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Elisabeth Hagen. “People are using mobile devices more and more to get quick information, so we’ve adapted our tools, allowing more people to get food safety messages faster. Now, people can ‘*Ask Karen*’ right away when they need food safety information, without being tethered to a computer.”

In the mobile format, people can “take” *Karen* with them to the grocery store, barbecue grill, farmers market and kitchen. Anywhere mobile devices can access the Internet, at any time of day, consumers can get immediate answers to questions such as, “Is food safe if left out overnight?” or “Should I use a wooden cutting board or a plastic one?”

By using *Ask Karen*, consumers can search for nearly 1,500 answers by topic or by product, chat with a live representative or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline (1-888-MPHotline). The application is currently optimized for the iPhone, iPad and Android devices.

Check out more through the USDA press release at www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2011/05/0200.xml.

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Export Requirement Updates



There are no updates reflected in this week's Export Library Requirements.

Complete information can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

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QR Codes: What Are They?



Even though it looks like a jumbled square, this is a QR code, short for Quick Response. Encoded within the square is information that takes you to a specified website, a phone number, a calendar event, and even a geolocation!

This two-dimensional code can be read by QR barcode readers and, more importantly, your smartphone! Imagine you are out and about using public transportation and you see an advertisement for a product. Only a small amount of information can be displayed on an ad, but then you see this code, scan it in on your camera phone with Internet capabilities, and voila! You are taken to the product's website where you can access a more significant amount of information.

To use this tool, the QR reader will have to be downloaded. Then simply point and snap a product's QR code using a smartphone, and go straight to a website or receive other product information.

For the recently launched *Mobile Ask Karen*, a smartphone application that instantly answers food safety question a QR code was designed to allow consumers with a smartphone, to access "Ask Karen" at anytime. To start using *Mobile Ask Karen* now, go to m.AskKaren.gov on your phone's browser, or scan the above QR code for *Mobile Ask Karen* into your smartphone.

Inspection Seminars Designed for International Government Officials

FSIS will host a meat and poultry inspection seminar for international officials in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, from May 16 through June 11.

This seminar will be held in cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico and includes basic HACCP certification. There will also be an in-depth review of FSIS verification of HACCP and sanitation requirements.

Other topics and activities include import and export policies and procedures, foreign inspection program equivalence, and field visits to import and export locations, as well as processing and slaughter plants. This seminar will be conducted in Spanish.

For more information, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/2011_Meat_&_Poultry_Inspection_Seminars/index.asp.

FSIS and Twitter: Over 100K and Counting

FSIS' Twitter handle, @USDAFoodSafety, has over 100,000 followers.

Are you one of them? If not, sign up to find food safety information, along with tips and resources to keep consumers and other interested groups informed of the latest agency news and events.

Receive recall notifications and updates, seasonal food safety advice and FSIS news at [Twitter.com/USDAFoodSafety](https://twitter.com/USDAFoodSafety). Tweets are also available in Spanish at twitter.com/USDAFoodSafe_es.

Visit USDA's Blog

Every day, the USDA Blog shares something new about its expansive mission. The blog provides a rich and diverse look at the work within the department, spanning the nation – and even the world – and highlights the breadth of USDA programs and the role it plays in the lives of every American.

Go to <http://blogs.usda.gov/> and see what's happening within the agency and across the department.

FSIS Revamps Weekly Residue Repeat Violator List

In response to requests from industry representatives to simplify the Weekly Violation List, FSIS is making the following changes to the list.

A user guide is available for more detailed instructions on how to use the FSIS Residue Repeat Violator List and will be located on the web page with the list.

The weekly list is in 2 parts:

Residue Repeat Violator List for Use by FSIS Inspection Program Personnel

- **Part I** – This part is intended to assist inspection program personnel to identify producers with more than 1 residue violation in the last 12 months, either in the same establishment or different establishments.

Residue Repeat Violator List for Use by Livestock Markets and Establishments

- **Part II** – This part is intended to assist establishments and livestock markets to identify producers with more than 1 residue violation in the last 12 months either in the same establishment or different establishments. Part II contains only the names of the producers listed by states.

To further eliminate confusion, FSIS is no longer publishing a monthly Residue Violator Alert List.

The list also includes results from the National Residue Program on residue testing data covering veterinary drugs, pesticides and environmental contaminants on meat, poultry and processed egg products. Livestock supplier information is provided by federally inspected slaughter establishments.

Go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Chemistry/index.asp to review this list and user guide in detail.

Updates on FSIS Testing for *E. coli*

Weekly updates for the agency's raw beef *E. coli* sampling program are posted to the FSIS website.

For comparative previous and current year results, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.coli_Testing_Results/index.asp.

Get Answers at *AskFSIS*

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, *askFSIS* offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As. To view recently posted topics, visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/>.

Check Out the PHIS Resource Page

Information about the dynamic, user-friendly data analytics system, called the Public Health Information System (PHIS) is available on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS.

FSIS is developing PHIS as an effort to collect, consolidate and analyze data. This public health-based approach is in line with the core principles of the President's Food Safety Working Group.

NACMCF Subcommittee to Hold Public Meetings

A subcommittee of the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) will hold a public meeting from June 7-9.

The subcommittee on Control Strategies for Reducing Foodborne Norovirus Infections will discuss what controls can be used to reduce the transmission of foodborne Human Noroviruses (HuNoV). The public meeting will be used to assess the current state of knowledge on HuNoV and consider the incidence of infection, attribution in foods, detection methodology and the most effective control practices and/or interventions.

The meetings will take place at the Aerospace Building, 901 D St., S.W., Room 369, Washington, D.C., on Tues., June 7, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Wed., June 8, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Thurs., June 9, from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

To attend, contact Karen Thomas-Sharp at (202) 690-6620 or karen.thomas-sharp@fsis.usda.gov. Due to increased security measures, all persons wishing to attend must RSVP in advance.

Food Safety Tips for Storm-Impacted Areas

Severe weather events can mean power outages, floods and other problems that can affect the safety of food. Knowing what to do before and after a weather event can help you reduce your risk of illness.

“Particularly during times of emergency, food safety can be a critical public health risk,” said FSIS Administrator Al Almanza. “In areas impacted by severe weather, the American public should be aware that information is readily available to help them protect their food supply.”

FSIS offers tips to keep food safe, even when the weather isn't. Check them out at www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Emergency_Preparedness_Fact_Sheets/index.asp.

Learn about other basic food safety principles by reviewing our fact sheets at www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/index.asp.