

# **FSIS Establishment Eligibility Criteria for the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Sampling Program<sup>1</sup> and FSIS Scheduling Algorithm for the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Sampling Programs for Raw Poultry**

## **Introduction**

FSIS assesses establishment performance for various poultry products against performance standards published in the *Federal Register*. In particular, the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* standards are assessed for young chicken carcasses, comminuted chicken, chicken parts (specifically legs, breasts, and wings), young turkey carcasses, and comminuted turkey. FSIS assigns samples for various poultry products each month under the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Sampling Programs for Raw Poultry through the Public Health Inspection System (PHIS). This is known as routine sampling<sup>2</sup>. The establishments and products selected monthly for sampling are chosen according to an algorithm from a list of eligible establishments and their respective products. These are the criteria used to create a list of establishments and products that are eligible for inclusion in the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Sampling Program, and the methods used to assign establishments for sampling.

Only the five product classes above have performance standard criteria and are assigned samples under routine sampling. For those establishments that do not pass the performance standard follow-up samples can be assigned as well. FSIS does test other poultry products such as mechanically-separated chicken, mechanically-separated turkey, and chicken parts other than legs, breasts and wings under exploratory projects.

This document specifically describes how establishments are determined to be either eligible or ineligible for testing and how the algorithm for assigning routine and follow-up samples to establishments specifically for products under performance standards operates.

## **Eligibility Criteria and the Sampling Frame**

The *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Sampling Program currently schedules five (5) different poultry product classes for routine sampling: Young Chicken Carcasses, Young Turkey Carcasses, Ground or other Comminuted Chicken, Ground or other Comminuted Turkey, and Chicken Parts (specifically, legs, breasts, and wings). Eligibility requirements for the Poultry Carcasses differ from the Raw Comminuted Poultry Products and from the Raw Chicken Parts. The first step in the scheduling process is to assemble the sampling frame, which is the list of eligible establishments and their respective products. An establishment's HACCP size does not factor into its eligibility.

### **I. Establishments Producing Eligible Product**

- a. The first step is to create a list of all establishments that produce sufficient volumes of eligible products. Currently, the smallest-volume producers are excluded (as defined below) from the program, as are ineligible products such as mechanically-separated chicken or turkey and raw product intended to be made into a ready-to-eat (RTE) product.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* testing for Raw Young Chicken Carcasses, Raw Young Turkey Carcasses, Raw Ground or Other Comminuted Chicken, Raw Ground or Other Comminuted Turkey, and Raw Chicken Parts.

<sup>2</sup> Defined in [81 FR 3940](#) and [81 FR 7285](#).

**b. Intact Raw Poultry Carcasses**

- a. Using slaughter volume data recorded in PHIS, the total heads of young chickens and young turkeys slaughtered at FSIS establishments over the last 12 months is collected. Based on data from a PHIS questionnaire, the proportion of birds slaughtered under a religious exemption is excluded from the total production in determining an establishment's eligibility. For example, if an establishment slaughters 30,000 young chickens over the course of a 12-month period, but the questionnaire indicates 50 percent are slaughtered under a religious exemption, then the production estimate used to determine eligibility is 15,000 birds. Such an establishment would not be eligible for sampling in the Verification Program. Establishments that meet the minimum production volume requirements are further evaluated in the next step. The current minimum production volume to be included is:
1. Young Chickens: minimum of 20,000 heads slaughtered per year
  2. Young Turkeys: minimum of 20,000 heads slaughtered per year

**c. Raw Chicken Parts**

- a. Establishments whose establishment profiles indicate they produce at least the minimum volume of chicken legs, breasts, or wings are eligible for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Sampling. The current minimum production volume to be included is 1,001 pounds per day.

**d. Raw Ground and Other Comminuted Poultry**

- a. Establishments whose PHIS profiles indicate they produce at least the minimum volume of ground or other comminuted (but not mechanically separated) chicken or turkey are eligible for sampling in the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Program. The average daily raw ground or comminuted chicken or turkey production volume listed in the establishment profile is used to determine whether an establishment meets minimum production volume requirements:
1. Raw Ground Chicken: minimum of 1,001 pounds produced per day.
  2. Raw Ground Turkey: minimum of 1,001 pounds produced per day.

**II. Active Establishments**

- a. The second step is to eliminate establishments that are not currently listed as active in their profiles, with one exception. If an establishment is inactive, but produced product within the last 12 months, samples may be scheduled on occasion to ensure seasonal producers are scheduled for sampling. Otherwise, establishments that are shut down, withdrawn from inspection, or otherwise not producing product are removed from eligibility.

**III. Scheduling Algorithm**

- a. Once the sampling frame has been assembled, the list of eligible establishments and their respective products is weighted by production volume and past rates of

*Salmonella*-positive product across all establishments in that product's production volume category, where available. The total number of samples allotted to each project is then assigned across establishments, with replacement, using these weights. FSIS intends to schedule at least the minimum number of samples per year per product published in [81 FR 7285](#) for as many establishments as practicable.

- b. If an establishment produces multiple eligible types of products tested in separate FSIS sampling projects, these products are scheduled independently. Assignment of samples in multiple eligible product types and projects is expected in such establishments. However, a ceiling exists so that no establishment is assigned more than five (5) samples per sampling project.

#### **IV. Scheduling Follow-up Samples**

Establishments that do not meet the *Salmonella* performance standard in poultry carcasses are assigned samples in the corresponding follow-up sampling project(s). Raw chicken parts, raw ground or otherwise comminuted chicken, and raw ground or otherwise comminuted turkey follow-up sampling projects are expected to begin later in 2018.

Follow-up samples are included in establishment category determinations. The details of this sampling are summarized below.

- a. When any establishment is identified as having failed to meet the *Salmonella* standard in either young chicken or young turkey carcasses, it is assigned 8 or 16 follow-up samples from the associated product as described in [FSIS Notice 01-18](#). These follow-up samples are in addition to routine samples.
- b. When an establishment moves out of Category 3, it will continue to be scheduled for routine samples under the sampling algorithm as described in section III. If it subsequently fails to meet the standard, follow-up samples will once again be scheduled.

#### **V. Exploratory Sampling**

- a. FSIS published in [81 FR 7285](#) that the agency would begin testing establishments that:
  - i. produced product under a religious exemption, or
  - ii. did not produce the minimum amount of product listed in Section I of this document.
- b. These establishments are currently excluded from performance standard testing. Sampling of these establishments was implemented in Fiscal Year 2017 under new exploratory sampling projects to begin gauging the levels of pathogens in these populations, as addressed in [FSIS Notice 27-17](#).
- c. FSIS currently samples certain poultry products that are not included under performance standards in exploratory sampling projects. These products include mechanically-separated chicken, mechanically-separated turkey, and chicken parts

other than legs, breasts, and wings. The eligibility criteria and sampling algorithm are not described here for those projects.