

A Healthy USDA Relationship



FSIS Primary “Customer” & Role

- Establishments can expect Inspectors to ask questions relative to regulatory compliance; it’s their job.
- Inspectors will rely on past personal experience in how they conduct their tasks.

Establish & Communicate: USDA vs. Facility Communication Chain

At least one person from the operations list must be accessible to USDA personnel at all times or they will go to someone you may not want them speaking to.

USDA Expected Communications Chain

1. HACCP Coordinator or Nearest Management
2. Elevate through Production Leadership
3. Plant Manager

Remain Professional, Remove Personal

- Focus on regulation, not personality.
- Only answer the question asked.
- If you don’t know the answer, let them know you’ll look into it and get back to them.

The Inspector is Not Always Right, Unless Allowed to Be

Educate yourself. Look up, read, interpret and understand the regulation.

- **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR):** Official regulations as written and applied.
- **FSIS Guidance:** USDA-generated to help establishments comply with various regulations using more laymen’s terms than CFR.
- **FSIS Directives:** Directives are instruction to FSIS on how to execute to the regulations.

Consider using resources to help understand regulation and rights:

- Trade Associations (e.g. Meat Institute, AAMP, SWMA)
- Industry peers
- USDA-FSIS regional meetings

Document ANY Questionable or Negative Interactions with Inspection Personnel

Ignoring early signs of issues make addressing the situation later more difficult. “If it is not written down, it did not happen.”

- Record all incidents (time, date, witnesses and details).
- Signed statements from personnel involved (time and date).
- Consider having 2 plant personnel present as the situation warrants.

Relevant Reporting FSIS Directives

FSIS Directive 4735.7-Industry Complaints ([FSIS Directive 4735.7 Revision 1: Industry Complaints Against FSIS Program Employees \(usda.gov\)](#))

FSIS Directive 4735.4-Reporting Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation, or Threat ([FSIS Directive 4735.4, Revision 3, Amendment 1: Reporting Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation or Threat \(usda.gov\)](#))



BY AMERICAN MEAT SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Document developed in consultation with the Meat Institute. For further information, email info@meatinstitute.org or call (202) 587-4200.

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