***Overall Sanitary Dressing Management: Verification, Documentation & Implementation***

**Process Verification & Documentation:***Observations of sanitary dressing practices relative to the written program must be completed and documented at a frequency that aligns best with the slaughter volume and past performance. Observations must be executed by a trained, independent* *designee when possible (i.e., no one who works on or oversees slaughter floor personnel). In general, observers and slaughter floor personnel must be comfortable and empowered knowing that failures and corrective actions are a sign of improving the process.*

**Personnel Training:***Personnel training is critical to the success of a sanitary dressing program. Observers and slaughter floor personnel must be trained to the requirements and held accountable for the process. Edits to the written program are to be made when feedback from personnel aligns with the optimal hygiene performance. All involved personnel must understand the critical nature of their roles in maintaining a clean carcass at every phase of dressing (i.e. don’t just wait for the trimmer to “clean up their mess”) as well as the consequences of haphazard sanitary dressing practices (e.g. cost of STEC positives to the company/customer, risk of serious consumer health effects if not taken seriously).*

***Documentation Writing & Management:***

***The Sanitary Dressing SOP should be reviewed at least annually and updated as changes to the process occur.***

***The following are recommended sections and general guidance of what narrative should be covered when writing a sanitary dressing program in hogs (skinned or scalded). Each section must address the critical process steps that contribute to hygienically preparing the carcass to comply with 9 CFR 310.18. Hygiene requirements can include, but not be limited to sanitizing/sterilizing order of knives, steels, and other equipment (e.g., sterilized knives should not be steeled on an unsterilized steel), the direction of cut made, the orientation of the knife to skin, s, etc.***

## DURING ALL STAGES OF SLAUGHTER SANITARY DRESSING, TRAINED SLAUGHTER EMPLOYEES MUST FOLLOW EACH OF THE LISTED ACTIONS WHERE APPLICABLE FOR THEIR POSITION:

* 1. The following shall be rinsed and sterilized (or sanitized) after each animal and as needed/soiled throughout the process including hands/gloves, aprons, and any equipment touching the carcass.
	2. Knives, steels, and other basic dressing equipment shall be suspended in sterilizers (where readily available) when not in use. If the sterilizer is not readily available, equipment shall be sheathed within a scabbard or similar suitable storage to prevent contamination.
	3. To prevent cross-contamination, carcasses shall not be moved to the next workstation until the previous carcass has moved to its next workstation.
	4. Any incidental contamination shall be trimmed from carcasses throughout all stages of sanitary dressing.
	5. If an abscess is found, all equipment that was contaminated, or may have become contaminated, shall be rinsed and sterilized (or sanitized) immediately after an abscess is removed or contacted. Any parts of the carcass that were or may have been contaminated shall be trimmed with clean and sterilized equipment.

## STICKING (BLEED OUT)

*Knife usage protocol and requirements for the stick (sanitize between hide break and stick, “two knife system,” etc.) are to be detailed.*

### SKINNING OR SCALDING

*If* ***skinning***: *Head skinning and defining cut lines as they relate to knife sanitation procedures (e.g., blade should cut from inside/out and away from the main carcass, sterilize before each new incision) is critical in this section since this is where much of the opportunity for carcass contamination occurs. Any additional facility-specific skin removal precautions to take such as around hocks, bung, and other critical “cut lines” etc., must be acknowledged and understood. As skins are loosened, the “flapping” of the skin can present a contamination risk, and relevant precautions to prevent this contamination must be addressed.*

*If* ***scalding***: *The scalding process must be defined within this section (e.g., water temperature and cleanliness, signs scalding is complete, etc.). Nail removal as well as any post-scalding scraping, hair singeing, and other carcass preparatory steps leading to bunging must also be addressed in this section.*

### BUNGING

*The process of preparing the bung area for successful gutting is a step of heightened risk and therefore must be described in how contamination will be prevented. Specifically, the exposing/freeing of the rectum area and the measures taken to prevent additional fecal contamination.*

### HEAD HANDLING

### *If collecting edibles from or selling the head (e.g., “head cheese”), any steps to prepare/inspect this region must be included in a section within this document. It is important to point out that brains, cheek meat, and head trimmings cannot be saved from animals stunned by lead/frangible bullets (projectiles) used to render the animal unconscious (9 CFR 310.18(b)).*

### EVISCERATION & PLUCK REMOVAL

*Important evisceration/pluck preparatory and process steps include trimming of midline (aka along skin break pattern line when applicable), knife orientation to avoid busting guts, and immediate measures to take in the event a busted gut results in carcass contamination. Acknowledging the risk and prevention of contamination from the bung and esophagus during removal should also be covered. The removal of other* *variety meats to prepare for USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) inspection should also be noted.*

### VARIETY MEATS (if applicable)

### *Variety meats being collected for human consumption and/or inspection must be identified in this section. Trimming, sorting and any antimicrobial intervention steps that will be taken must be explained. In addition, how the variety meats will be presented to the next stage of processing can be defined here (in lugs, hung on organ trees, etc.).*

### SPLITTING

*The splitting section should address sanitizing/sterilizing requirements of the split saw and any processes followed during this step.*

### TRIMMING

*Visual scanning for fecal, ingesta, milk, and other foreign contaminants must be addressed.  Bruising or blood build-up and high-risk contamination areas such as skin break lines (when applicable), hocks, and necks should be called out as areas of scrutiny during the final trim stage. This section must also acknowledge that all slaughter personnel are responsible for visual inspection and trimming of contaminants throughout each dressing stage.*

**FINAL INSPECTION & ANTIMICROBIAL INTERVENTION (HOT WATER WASH / ACID SPRAY)**

*This section should set requirements leading up to the final USDA inspection. Noting or referencing the facility’s zero-tolerance policy (frequency, “who,” etc.), if any, is also helpful to add. The proper antimicrobial intervention steps (for each intervention) must also be outlined in this section or if found throughout multiple sections of sanitary dressing, can be incorporated into the respective sections.*

### COOLER SPACING

*Although not typically thought of regarding sanitary dressing, hot carcass cooler spacing is critical for proper carcass cooling to aid in reduced microbial load and higher quality products down the line. This section should lay out standards that will aid in optimal carcass cooling, specifically within the first 24 hours of cooling.*