

**9 CFR Parts 304, 308, 310, 320, 327, 381, 416, and 417**

[Docket No. 93-016-2N]

**Technical Conference Regarding E. coli Verification Testing****AGENCY:** Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is holding a conference, "Technical Conference Regarding *E. coli* Verification Testing," on September 12-13, 1996. The conference will address scientific and technical issues related to the *E. coli* verification testing required by FSIS's final rule, "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems," published on July 25, 1996.

**DATES:** The conference will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on September 12 and from 8:30 a.m. until Noon on September 13, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** The two-day conference will be held at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Back of the South Building Cafeteria (between the 2nd and 3rd Wings). Submit one original and two copies of written comments to: FSIS Docket Clerk, DOCKET #93-016F, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 4352, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-3700. All comments submitted on this rule will be available for public inspection in the Docket Clerk's Office between 8:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** To register for the conference, or to arrange to present technical data, contact Betsy Kogan, at (800) 485-4429 or E-mail usdafs/s=confer@mhs.attmail.com.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On July 25, 1996, FSIS published a final rule, "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems" (61 FR 38805). This rule introduced sweeping changes to the meat and poultry inspection system. Among other things, the rule requires all slaughter establishments to test for *E. coli* at a frequency based on production volume to verify that they are meeting the established performance criteria.

In the preamble to the final rule (pp. 38844-38846), FSIS solicited comments and information on a number of technical issues concerning the protocols for *E. coli* testing. FSIS also announced that a public conference would be held to discuss such issues.

The first conference, "Technical Conference Regarding *E. coli* Verification Testing" has been scheduled for September 12-13, 1996.

This conference, led by a panel of Government scientists, will provide interested parties the opportunity to present technical data, information, and views related to the *E. coli* testing requirements.

At the conference, FSIS officials will present a brief overview of the *E. coli* testing program. FSIS invites interested parties to make presentations addressing the following:

Are there alternative, equally or more effective risk-based microbial sampling protocols that could be used for process control verification by establishments that slaughter cattle or swine?

Are there more appropriate anatomical sites for microbial testing than those adopted?

Are there alternative sampling frequencies that would elicit results more indicative of process control performance?

How could the proposed testing protocol be revised to better account for differing establishment characteristics and how can FSIS minimize the cost to establishments of *E. coli* testing without sacrificing testing effectiveness?

Are there worker safety concerns regarding sampling from difficult to reach carcass sites and, if so, how might they be mitigated?

Given that testing is based on production volume, are there effective approaches other than requiring very small establishments to conduct a minimal amount of testing during certain months of the year?

Persons wishing to make presentations should contact Betsy Kogan (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), to advise her of the nature of the presentation. Transcripts of the conference will be available in the FSIS Docket Room (See **ADDRESSES**).

Also, interested parties are reminded that written comments will be received on or before September 23, 1996, on the scientific and technical issues associated with *E. coli* testing. Comments should be sent to the FSIS Docket Room (See **ADDRESSES**).

Done at Washington, DC, on: August 16, 1996.

Michael R. Taylor,

Acting Under Secretary for Food Safety.

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**9 CFR Parts 304, 308, 310, 320, 327, 381, 416, and 417**

[Docket No. 93-016-1N]

**Schedule of FSIS Public Meetings Regarding the Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems Final Rule****AGENCY:** Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Announcement of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announces a series of public meetings to discuss specific aspects of the final rule, "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems," published on July 25, 1996. These meetings are intended to assist in the understanding and implementation of the final rule. The public is invited to comment on the schedule, including conflicts. Some dates may be changed to ensure the meetings will accomplish their intended purposes.

**DATES:** See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for dates of the meetings.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit one original and two copies of written comments to: FSIS Docket Clerk, DOCKET #93-016F, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 4352, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-3700. All comments submitted on this rule will be available for public inspection in the Docket Clerk's Office between 8:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for location of the meetings.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Charles Danner, Director, Planning Staff, (202) 501-7138, with any questions about the meeting schedule. To register for the meetings, call (800) 485-4429, FAX (202) 501-7642, or E-mail usdafs/s=confer@mhs.attmail.com.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On July 25, 1996, FSIS published a final rule, "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems" (61 FR 38805). This rule introduced sweeping changes to the meat and poultry inspection system.

As announced in the final rule, FSIS is holding meetings to address the implementation of the rule and to discuss specific scientific and technical aspects of the rule.

FSIS also will hold additional meetings on issues related to the final rule. The Agency will hold a "Public Hearing on Criteria for Equivalence of Foreign Inspection Systems." This