

Food Safety

Food Safety and Inspection Service

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on June 17, 1981, pursuant to authority contained in 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.). At that time, the Service was delegated authority for regulating the meat and poultry industry to ensure that meat and poultry, and meat and poultry products moving in interstate and foreign commerce were safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.

Under the Secretary's Memorandum No. 1010-1, dated October 23, 1994, the Service's authority was extended to include the inspection of egg products. Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products Inspection Federal meat and poultry inspection is mandatory for the following animals and birds used for human food: cattle, calves, swine, goats, sheep, lambs, horses (and other equines), chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas. The work includes inspection of each animal or bird at slaughter, and inspection of processed products during various stages of production. Under the Egg Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 1031-1056), the Service conducts mandatory, continuous inspection of the production of liquid, dried, and frozen egg products, to ensure that egg products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and accurately labeled. The Service tests samples of egg products, and meat and poultry products for microbial and chemical contaminants to monitor trends for enforcement purposes.

Facilities and equipment are approved by FSIS before inspection is granted, and each product label must be approved by

the agency before products can be sold. The agency monitors meat and poultry products in storage, distribution, and retail channels; and takes necessary compliance actions to protect the public, including detention of products, voluntary product recalls, court-ordered seizures of products, administrative withdrawal of inspection, and referral for criminal prosecution. The Service also conducts State programs for the inspection of meat and poultry products sold in intrastate commerce.

The Service monitors livestock upon arrival at federally inspected facilities to ensure compliance with the Humane Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. 1901-1906); conducts voluntary reimbursed inspection for rabbits, other domestic food animals, and certain egg products not covered by the inspection law (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627); and ensures that inedible egg products and inedible products from meat or poultry, such as offal rendered for animal feed, are properly identified and isolated from edible products (21 U.S.C. 1031-1056 and 7 U.S.C. 1624, respectively).

The Service maintains a toll-free Meat and Poultry Hotline (800-535-4555; in the Washington metropolitan area, 202-720-3333) to answer questions about labeling and safe handling of meat and poultry, meat and poultry products, and egg products. The hotline is also accessible (on the same extension) by TDD.

For further information, contact the Director of Information and Legislative Affairs, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-7943.

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

This mission area of USDA ensures access to nutritious, healthful diets for all Americans. It coordinates USDA's consumer education and outreach activities, encourages consumer

involvement in USDA policymaking, and ensures that USDA adequately addresses consumer concerns and interests.

It also emphasizes increasing the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), to