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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. FSIS–2025–0179]

Exploring Practical Strategies To Reduce Salmonella in Poultry Products

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: FSIS will hold a public meeting on January 14, 2026, to discuss practical strategies for reducing *Salmonella* illnesses attributed to poultry products. This meeting supports USDA's broader food safety initiative and follows the withdrawal of the previous *Salmonella* framework proposed rule in response to issues raised in the public comments. FSIS is seeking input on how to address *Salmonella* through better use of data, alternative performance standard parameters, and policy options that reflect both public health goals and industry realities, especially for small and very small producers.

DATES: The public meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST. All attendees, whether attending in person or virtually, must register for the meeting by January 7, 2026. Attendees planning to share public comments during the meeting must register by January 5, 2026.

Submit comments on or before February 2, 2026.

ADDRESSES: The public meeting will be held in person at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, South Building, Jefferson Auditorium, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250. Attendees must enter through Wing 3 on Independence Avenue and pass through USDA security screening. The South Building is a Federal facility and attendees should allow adequate time to

pass through the security screening system. A valid photo ID is required to enter the building. FSIS will also provide a virtual option for individuals who wish to participate and provide comments to the meeting remotely. Registration instructions and meeting materials will be available on the FSIS website at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/registration-2026-salmonella-meeting>. The agenda and transcripts will be available on the FSIS website at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/news-events/events-meetings>. Sign language interpreter services will be provided.

Comments on this notice may be made by one of the following methods:

- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** This website provides the ability to type short comments directly into the comment field on this web page or attach a file for lengthier comments. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the on-line instructions at that site for submitting comments.

- **Mail:** Send to Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Mailstop 3758, Washington, DC 20250–3700.

- **Hand- or Courier-Delivered Submittals:** Deliver to 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 350–E, Washington, DC 20250–3700.

Instructions: All items submitted by mail or electronic mail must include the Agency name and docket number FSIS–2025–0179. Comments received in response to this docket will be made available for public inspection and posted without change, including any personal information, to <https://www.regulations.gov>.

Docket: For access to background documents or comments received, email docketclerk@usda.gov or call 202–286–2255 to schedule a time to visit the FSIS Docket Room at 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–3700.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions related to the public meeting, please contact the FSIS Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education at 202–853–6166 or FRN@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

FSIS is the public health agency in USDA whose mission is to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products are safe,

wholesome, and properly labeled. *Salmonella* remains a leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States, and poultry products continue to be a leading source of exposure among products under FSIS jurisdiction.

Between 2017 to 2021, the number of chicken samples in which FSIS detected *Salmonella* decreased by more than 50%. However, from 2021 to 2024, no further significant reductions in *Salmonella* contamination have been observed for any type of poultry products sampled by FSIS. Given this plateau in contamination levels, FSIS is exploring how to further drive reductions in *Salmonella* contamination. Modern laboratory technologies, including methods to serotype and rapidly enumerate *Salmonella*, provide FSIS with opportunities to refine its current performance standard approach.

According to the most recent report from the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (2022), approximately 25% of foodborne *Salmonella* illnesses are attributable to poultry—about 20% from chicken and just over 5% from turkey.¹ While poultry remains a significant source of *Salmonella* illnesses, a separate analysis of reported illnesses found that illnesses caused by poultry-associated *Salmonella* serotypes declined between 1996 and 2019, whereas those linked to non-poultry-associated serotypes increased.² This reduction occurred despite a roughly 15% increase in per capita chicken consumption over the same time period. A second study, which accounts for these changes in consumption, found a 19% reduction in the probability of illness per serving of chicken during a slightly different time period (1998 through 2017).³

In August 2024, FSIS published a proposed rule and determination titled “*Salmonella* Framework for Raw Poultry Products” in the **Federal Register** (89 FR 64678). The proposal outlined a strategy to reduce *Salmonella*-related illnesses by establishing final product standards

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/ifsac/php/data-research/annual-reports/index.html>.

² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/risa.14181>.

³ Williams, M.S., and E.D. Ebel. 2022. Temporal changes in the proportion of *Salmonella* outbreaks associated with 12 food commodity groups in the United States. *Epidemiology and Infection*. 150:e126.

based on specific *Salmonella* levels and serotypes, revising microbial monitoring requirements, and incorporating Statistical Process Control (SPC) methods.

FSIS received over 7,000 public comments on the proposed framework. Stakeholders raised concerns about FSIS' legal authority, the scientific basis for the proposed standards, and the potential economic impacts—particularly on small poultry growers and processors. After reviewing the comments, FSIS withdrew the proposed rule and determination on April 25, 2025 (90 FR 17344), to further evaluate its approach. In the withdrawal notice, the Agency reaffirmed its commitment to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses but acknowledged that several key issues raised in the comments warranted additional consideration.

Shortly after the withdrawal notice, on July 15, 2025, Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced a comprehensive plan to strengthen USDA's efforts to combat foodborne illness.⁴ The plan emphasizes science-based strategies, practical implementation, and strong partnerships across the food system. FSIS' continued assessment of its *Salmonella* strategy aligns with the broader goals outlined in this plan.

Public Meeting

As part of its ongoing reassessment of its *Salmonella* strategy, FSIS will hold a public meeting on January 14, 2026, to gather input on innovative, practical, and science-based strategies to further reduce *Salmonella* illnesses associated with poultry products.

Leading up to the meeting, FSIS held a series of interactive roundtable discussions with various stakeholders, including representatives from large and small poultry establishments, industry associations, commercial purchasers of raw poultry, academia, and consumer advocacy groups. These discussions focused on broad policy and technical issues related to *Salmonella* control. The public meeting will build upon those conversations and provide an opportunity for additional stakeholders to share their perspectives.

This meeting will focus on gathering feedback from the public on these four key topic areas:

1. FSIS Data Uses and Opportunities
 - How FSIS data inform business decisions
 - Suggestions for improving FSIS data accessibility and usability

2. Factors that inform *Salmonella* Controls
 - Barriers to implementing additional controls
 - Incentives and support for small producers
3. Alternative Parameters for Performance Standards
 - Use of serotype, enumeration, genomic factors (e.g., virulence or antimicrobial resistance)
 - Supporting data, public health impact, available technology, and industry feasibility
 - Product type, sampling frequency, or lotting
4. Policy Options Beyond Current Performance Standards
 - Alternative or innovative strategies to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses

An agenda will be published online before the public meeting. FSIS will finalize the agenda on or before the meeting date and post it on the FSIS website at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/news-events/events-meetings>.

Registration

There is no fee to register for the public meeting, but registration is required for all participants attending either in person or virtually. All attendees must register online by visiting <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/registration-2026-salmonella-meeting>, after which they will receive an email acknowledging their registration. Stakeholders who wish to speak at the meeting must notify FSIS during registration and must register by January 5, 2026. Attendees that do not plan to speak at the public meeting must register by January 7, 2026.

Public Comments and Participation in Meetings

Stakeholders may attend the meeting either in person or virtually. Those who indicate during registration that they wish to speak—whether attending in person or virtually—will have the opportunity to provide oral comments. Each speaker will be limited to three minutes. Attendees who wish to speak must indicate their interest and the topic(s) they wish to address when registering. Due to anticipated high interest and limited time, FSIS will do its best to accommodate all who pre-register to speak. Speaking slots will be assigned in the order of registration and generally organized by topic area(s), and FSIS will notify speakers in advance of their approximate speaking time.

Stakeholders who do not indicate their intent to speak during registration may not be able to provide oral comments during the meeting due to time constraints. However, there will be

an open comment period at the end of the meeting for general questions or remarks. Written comments may also be submitted as described in the **ADDRESSES** section above.

Transcripts

As soon as the meeting transcripts are available, they will be accessible on the FSIS website at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/news-events/events-meetings>.

Additional Public Notification

Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, FSIS will announce this **Federal Register** publication on-line through the FSIS web page located at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/federal-register>. FSIS will also announce and provide a link through the FSIS *Constituent Update*, which is used to provide information regarding FSIS policies, procedures, regulations, **Federal Register** notices, FSIS public meetings, and other types of information that could affect or would be of interest to our constituents and stakeholders. The *Constituent Update* is available on the FSIS web page. Through the web page, FSIS is able to provide information to a much broader, more diverse audience. In addition, FSIS offers an email subscription service which provides automatic and customized access to selected food safety news and information. This service is available at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/subscribe>. Options range from recalls to export information, regulations, directives, and notices. Customers can add or delete subscriptions themselves and have the option to password protect their accounts.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the

⁴ <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOC/bulletins/3e98d3a>.

responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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Denise Eblen,

Deputy Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. FSIS-2025-0180]

Delayed Verification Sampling of Not Ready-to-Eat Breaded Stuffed Chicken Products

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: FSIS is delaying the implementation of its verification activities related to *Salmonella* in not ready-to-eat (NRTE) breaded stuffed chicken product because of current testing method limitations. The current available test methods have accuracy limitations and have resulted in findings of false positives, especially at low levels of contamination.

DATES: FSIS will not begin sampling and testing NRTE breaded stuffed chicken or other verification activities related to that product on November 3, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rachel Edelstein, Assistant Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Development by telephone at (202) 205-0495.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: FSIS is the public health agency within the USDA responsible for ensuring that meat,

poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. In support of this mission, FSIS published a final determination in the **Federal Register** on May 1, 2024, declaring that NRTE breaded stuffed chicken products containing *Salmonella* at levels of 1 colony forming unit per gram (1 CFU/g) or higher are adulterated under the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA)(21 U.S.C. 453 (g)(1) and (3))(89 FR 35033).

The final determination also announced FSIS' intention to implement sampling and testing of raw incoming chicken components used to produce NRTE breaded stuffed chicken products (88 FR 35033, 35050-35051). The testing program was initially set to begin on May 1, 2025. On April 11, 2025, FSIS extended the start date until November 3, 2025, to give the Agency additional time to finalize relevant guidance and instructions and to prepare laboratories for sampling and testing (90 FR 15433).

FSIS is now announcing a further delay in the implementation of verification sampling and testing and other verification activities for NRTE breaded stuffed chicken products. The available methods, including the reference method Most Probable Number (MPN) have accuracy limitations and have resulted in findings of false positives for *Salmonella* at 1 CFU/g; that is, there have been instances in which some product that in fact contains less than 1 CFU/g has tested positive.

Specifically, an evaluation study conducted by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS),¹ tested source material for NRTE breaded stuffed chicken, consistent with the sampling approach FSIS planned to use and found false positives. According to the study, under the specific method² FSIS planned to use, if a sample contains *Salmonella* at a concentration of 0.9 CFU/g, there is a 75% chance the method will report ≥ 1 CFU/g. If a sample is 0.5 CFU/g, there would still be a 40% chance the method would report ≥ 1 CFU/g. As a result, moving forward with the current testing method could lead to enforcement actions against products that are positive for *Salmonella* at less than 1 CFU/g and are, therefore, not

¹ Schmidt, J.W., Wu, W., Harhay, D.M. & Wheeler, T. L., (2025) Identification of Chicken Component Samples Containing *Salmonella* Concentrations Greater Than or Equal to 1 CFU/g. *Meat and Muscle Biology* 9(1): 18993, 1-8. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22175/mmb.18993>.

² More information about the "Confidently Above Threshold" (CAT) method and the CAT method protocol (CAT-80) is available in the article in *Meat and Muscle Biology* at: <https://doi.org/10.22175/mmb.18993>.

adulterated based on the final determination published May 1, 2024 (89 FR 35033).

Applying a quantitative threshold (i.e., 1 CFU/g) for *Salmonella* in raw poultry is a regulatory approach the Agency has not taken before. FSIS has historically relied on presence or absence testing to verify whether product is adulterated based on pathogen testing (e.g., when testing ready-to-eat product for *Listeria monocytogenes* or *Salmonella* or applicable raw beef product for Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*).

Given the implications of enforcement based on a specific numerical threshold, FSIS needs additional time to reevaluate the testing program and determine its viability moving forward.

This delay reflects FSIS' commitment to ensuring that enforcement decisions are based on data that are not only scientifically valid, but also operationally reliable, reproducible, and fair. This delay also gives industry more time to implement controls to reduce *Salmonella* in source components used to produce NRTE breaded stuffed chicken.

At this time, FSIS is not establishing a new implementation date. The duration of the delay will depend largely on whether the Agency is able to refine the current method or develop and validate an alternative method that can be reliably applied in a regulatory context. FSIS will provide advance notice in the **Federal Register** before beginning verification sampling and testing activities.

Additional Public Notification

Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, FSIS will announce this **Federal Register** publication on-line through the FSIS web page located at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/federal-register>.

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