

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Food Safety and Inspection Service****9 CFR Parts 308, 310, 318, 320, 325, 326, 327, and 381****[Docket No. 93-016P]****RIN 0583-AB69****Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems****AGENCY:** Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.**ACTION:** Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is proposing requirements applicable to all FSIS-inspected meat and poultry establishments that are designed to reduce the occurrence and numbers of pathogenic microorganisms in meat and poultry products and to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness associated with the consumption of those products. The proposals would (1) clarify the responsibility of establishment management to ensure compliance with sanitation requirements; (2) require at least one antimicrobial treatment during the slaughter process prior to chilling of the carcass; (3) establish enforceable requirements for prompt chilling of carcasses and parts; (4) establish interim targets for pathogen reduction and mandate daily microbial testing in slaughter establishments to determine whether targets are being met or remedial measures are necessary; and (5) require that all meat and poultry establishments develop, adopt, and implement a system of preventive controls designed to improve the safety of their products, known as HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). FSIS is also announcing its intent to initiate rulemaking jointly with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to establish Federal standards for the safe handling of food during transportation, distribution, and storage of the products prior to delivery to retail stores, as well as further efforts to encourage adoption and enforcement by States of consistent, science-based standards to ensure food safety at the retail level. These proposals and initiatives are part of a comprehensive strategy to improve the safety of meat and poultry products when they are delivered to the consumer.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before June 5, 1995.**ADDRESSES:** Submit written comments in triplicate to Diane Moore, Docket

Clerk, Room 3171 South Building, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Oral comments, as permitted under the Poultry Products Inspection Act, should be directed to the appropriate person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: (1) **GENERAL:** Dr. Judith A. Segal, Director, Policy, Evaluation, and Planning Staff, (202) 720-7773; (2) **SANITATION:** Dr. Isabel Arrington, Staff Officer, Inspection Management Program, Inspection Operations, (202) 720-7905; (3) **ANTIMICROBIAL TREATMENTS:** Dr. William O. James, II, Director, Slaughter Inspection Standards and Procedures Division, Science and Technology, (202) 720-3219; (4) **TEMPERATURE CONTROLS:** Carl S. Custer, Staff Officer, Processed Products Inspection Division, Science and Technology, (202) 501-7321; (5) **MICROBIAL TESTING:** Dr. Richard A. Carnevale, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Scientific Support, Science and Technology, (202) 205-0675; (6) **HACCP:** Dr. Dorothy Stringfellow, Director, HACCP Office, Science and Technology, (202) 690-2087; (7) **TRANSPORTATION AND RETAIL:** Patrick J. Clerkin, Director, Evaluation and Enforcement Division, Compliance Program, Regulatory Programs, (202) 254-2537, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

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I. Background*Purpose of This Document*

The mission of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is to ensure that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. Current FSIS regulatory requirements and inspection procedures contribute much to the achievement of these goals, but there is a critical gap in the FSIS program. The current program does not directly target pathogenic microorganisms, which frequently contaminate otherwise wholesome carcasses. It also does not make meat and poultry establishments legally responsible for taking systematic, preventive measures to reduce or eliminate the presence of pathogenic microorganisms in meat and poultry products. This gap in the FSIS program has important public health implications because a significant portion of the cases of foodborne illness in the United States is associated with the consumption of meat and poultry products that are contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms.

To protect public health and reduce the risk of foodborne illness, FSIS proposes to fill the gap in its current system by requiring new measures that will target and reduce the presence of pathogenic microorganisms in meat and poultry products. FSIS is also beginning a fundamental shift in the paradigm governing its inspection program. FSIS