

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS  
FOOD SAFETY CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION  
Meat and Poultry Inspection Service  
MONTPELIER, VT  
Chuck Ross, Secretary



# MIS DIRECTIVE

Adopted from FSIS Directive 5420.1 Rev. 8

5420.1,  
Revision 8

6/1/15

## FOOD DEFENSE VERIFICATION TASKS AND THREAT NOTIFICATION RESPONSE PROCEDURES FOR THE OFFICE OF FIELD OPERATIONS

### I. PURPOSE

This directive sets out the instructions for conducting the Food Defense Verification (FDV) tasks assigned to inspection program personnel (IPP) at meat and poultry establishments. This revised directive incorporates the instructions from FSIS Directive 5420.4, *Food Defense Verification and Surveillance Procedures and National Terrorism Advisory System Alert Response for the Office of International Affairs Import Inspection Division*, provides instructions for the Public Health Information System (PHIS), and provides instructions for completing the annual food defense plan survey.

#### KEY POINTS:

- *How threats to the Food and Agriculture Sector are communicated*
- *How to effectively address and resolve noted security concerns to ensure that food is protected, thereby protecting public health*
- *How to determine whether an establishment or plant has a functional food defense plan (FDP)*
- *How to complete food defense verification tasks in PHIS*
- *How to complete the food defense plan survey*

### II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Notice 29-14, Ninth Food Defense Plan Survey, 6/27/14

VT Directive 5420.1, Rev. 7, *Food Defense Verification Procedures and National Terrorism Advisory System Alert Response for The Office of Field Operations*, 6/27/11

VT Directive 5420.4, Rev. 6, *Food Defense Verification And Surveillance Procedures and National Terrorism Advisory System Alert Response for the Office Of International Affairs Import Inspection Division*, 7/20/11

### III. BACKGROUND

A. Food defense is the protection of food products from intentional contamination or adulteration where there is an intent to cause public health harm or economic disruption. Factors that may affect the vulnerability to intentional adulteration could include the following:

1. Nature of the food product: In general, foods that are most vulnerable to intentional adulteration have one or more of the following characteristics:
  - a. Large batch size,
  - b. Uniform mixing,
  - c. Short shelf life, and
  - d. Accessibility to the product; and
2. Product volume: Establishments that produce a greater volume of product may be a more desirable target for intentional adulteration because a greater volume of adulterated product can lead to greater public health consequences.

B. A functional food defense plan (FDP) is an approach to mitigate vulnerabilities. A functional FDP is a set of procedures or practices that an establishment uses to reduce the risk of intentional adulteration of its incoming raw materials or outgoing products. A FDP is functional when the plan is written, the measures in the written plan are implemented, the plan is tested periodically, and the plan is reviewed annually or when changes occur within or outside the establishment or plant that could affect the vulnerability of the product being produced (e.g., new products produced or current process is modified). The absence of a functional FDP may increase an establishment's vulnerability to intentional adulteration because important security measures needed to protect the facility, product, and employees may not be in place. Functional FDPs are voluntary in official establishments (i.e., not mandated by regulation); however, such plans are an important tool that can reduce the risk of intentional adulteration of food products. IPP need to be aware that VAAFM encourages establishments and plants to develop a functional FDP as a means to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from intentional adulteration incidents.

#### **IV. THREAT NOTIFICATION**

A. The VT Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) is the primary point of contact for receipt of threat information.

1. If a threat has the potential or is expected to affect food or agriculture, DEMHS informs the VAAFM POC for emergency management.
2. The VAAFM POC is to determine the appropriate distribution of the threat information and coordinate with the Division of Food Safety Consumer Protection, as appropriate.
3. In the event of a significant incident, the FSIS Emergency Management Committee may be alerted or activated and other response actions taken pursuant to VT Directive 5500.2, *Significant Incident Response*.

B. Inspectors-in-Charge (IICs) are to ensure that any notifications distributed to field employees pursuant to this directive are available to the IPP or import inspection personnel in the establishment.

C. As soon as IICs are notified of threat information, they are to inform establishment or plant management of the alert. IPP are to document their discussion with establishment management in a memorandum of interview (MOI) (see VT Directive 5010.1, *Food Safety Related Topics During Weekly Meetings*).

D. DEMHS is to notify the VAAFM POC of any changes in threat information, to include when the period of concern has expired. The IICs are to advise other IPP or import inspection personnel in the establishment or plant and establishment management of the change in threat status.

## **V. GENERAL FDV RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. IPP are to conduct FDV tasks to identify potential vulnerabilities within or outside the establishment or plant that could lead to or allow deliberate adulteration of a food product.
- B. IPP are to perform FDV tasks at the frequency prescribed in PHIS.
- C. When the Federal government receives information about a specific or credible terrorist threat to food or agriculture, IPP are to increase the frequency at which they perform FDV tasks to the frequency prescribed in Table 1, Section IX. PHIS does not automatically increase the frequency under these conditions.

## **VI. FUNCTIONAL FOOD DEFENSE PLAN**

- A. The development of a functional FDP is voluntary. Establishments or plants are not obligated to develop a functional FDP, and they are not required to share the plan with IPP or import inspection personnel.
- B. The Agency has developed numerous guidance documents (e.g., model food defense plans, worksheets, checklists, and fact sheets) for consumers, industry, and State and local agencies. All of these materials are available at: [Food Defense and Emergency Response](#).
- C. If the establishment or plant has developed a FDP, IPP are to determine if the plan is functional. A functional FDP has all of the following characteristics:
  - 1. It is written;
  - 2. The measures described in the plan are implemented;
  - 3. The measures are periodically tested; and
  - 4. The plan is reviewed annually (i.e., within the calendar year) and revised when changes occur within or outside the establishment or plant that may affect the vulnerability of the product.
- D. If the establishment or plant is not implementing elements of its FDP, then V AAFM would not consider the establishment to have a functional FDP. However, IPP are not to take an enforcement action if an establishment or plant is not implementing all of the elements in their FDP because there is no regulatory requirement for such plans. IPP are not to show or share the FDP with any personnel that are not associated with the establishment or plant because it may contain proprietary information.
- E. During a FDP survey (see Section XII) or whenever IPP become aware of a change in the status of the establishment's food defense plan, IPP are to discuss the FDP or the observed change with establishment management at the next weekly meeting (see VT Directive 5010.1). IPP are to determine through these discussions whether the plan is functional.
- F. IPP are also to document their findings in PHIS. Under Establishment Profile, click on the "General" tab. Then click on the "Other" tab. Under "Plans" place a check mark in the box after the question, "Does the establishment have a written Food Defense Plan?" if the establishment has a functional FDP. If the establishment does not have a functional FDP, leave the box blank. Click "Save" before exiting the tab.

## **VII. FOOD DEFENSE ACTIVITIES**

- A. All IPP are to perform FDV tasks listed in Section VIII.

B. PHIS will automatically generate one routine FDV task per week to the establishment's task list. If additional FDV tasks are required based on credible threat information, IPP personnel are to schedule additional directed tasks to their task calendar. If additional FDV tasks are required based on threat information, IPP are responsible for determining the frequency for performing these additional tasks based on information provided in Table 1, Section IX. IPP are to follow the instructions in VT Directive 13,000.1, *Scheduling In-Plant Inspection Tasks in the Public Health Information System (PHIS)*, when scheduling a directed PHIS task.

C. IPP are to review the establishment profile concerning functional FDPs to verify that the profile information is accurate. This review is to be performed annually after completion of the FDP survey, or when the status of an establishment's FDP changes. If the profile is inaccurate, IPP are to correct the profile information when performing the next Profile Update task (refer to VT Directive 5300.1, *Managing the Establishment Profile in the Public Health Information System (PHIS)*).

D. If the establishment or plant does not have a functional food defense plan, IPP are to inform their immediate supervisor and then inform establishment or plant management that FSIS has developed a General Food Defense Plan that can be adopted simply by reviewing and signing the plan. The General Food Defense Plan is available in English, traditional Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Spanish. If the establishment or plant needs a copy of the General Food Defense Plan, IPP are to provide the name and mailing address of the establishment to the Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training Small Plant Help Desk by e-mail at [Infosource@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:Infosource@fsis.usda.gov) or call 1-877-374-7435, and the plan will be mailed. Alternatively, a copy of the General Food Defense Plan can be downloaded from the FSIS Web site at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fooddefense>.

E. IICs assigned to multi-inspector, multi-shift establishments are to use the established information-sharing practices to ensure that they perform the FDV tasks at the prescribed frequencies. The frequency of alternating FDV tasks across shifts should be either weekly or every other week. The Immediate Supervisor is to provide any necessary oversight.

## VIII. FOOD DEFENSE VERIFICATION TASKS

A. The purpose of the following FDV tasks is to identify potential weaknesses in an establishment's or plant's food defense security measures that could make its products vulnerable to intentional adulteration. A potential weakness can be any part of the food production or storage system where a protective measure should be implemented to protect a product from intentional adulteration, but such a measure is found to be missing or not in place. FDV tasks cover the following five areas within an establishment's food production system:

1. Water systems;
2. Processing/Manufacturing;
3. Storage areas;
4. Shipping and receiving; and
5. Re-inspection/Staging Areas (applies to import establishments).

B. **Water systems** - to assess vulnerable points for the Water Systems FDV task, IPP are to verify whether the establishment or plant restricts access to water systems and associated activities on the premises, including (note: list is not all-inclusive and may not apply to all establishments):

1. Water storage tanks, potable water lines, and water reuse systems;
2. Ice machines and ice storage facilities;

3. Water used to prepare injection solutions, surfactant, antimicrobial agent sprays, and chill tank recharge;
4. Water and ice used in emulsification (e.g., for the production of deli meats and hot dogs); and
5. Outside wells.

**C. Processing/Manufacturing** - to assess vulnerable points for the Processing/Manufacturing FDV task, IPP are to verify whether the establishment or plant restricts access to processing and manufacturing areas and associated activities on the premises, including (note: list is not all-inclusive and may not apply to all establishments):

1. Restricting access to sensitive processing and manufacturing areas by unauthorized individuals (including employees or maintenance workers);
2. Putting security measures in place to monitor sensitive processing and manufacturing areas (e.g., camera surveillance, color-coded uniforms for employees, identification badges, buddy system, or sign-out sheets), especially in areas where bulk products are mixed or processed; and
3. Observing production/manufacturing processes (e.g., raw or cooked product handling, brine formulation room, further processing, and packaging of final product) for signs of intentional adulteration.

**D. Storage Areas** - To assess vulnerable points for the Storage Areas FDV task, IPP are to verify that storage areas are secure from intentional adulteration activities, including (note: list is not all-inclusive and may not apply to all establishments or plants):

1. Verifying that the establishment or plant has implemented access control procedures for storage areas, including access and usage logs;
2. Observing products in cold and dry storage areas for evidence of adulteration, including:
  - a. Bulk product ingredients that will undergo mixing or are mixed, such as combo bins of meat trim and poultry parts used for grinding or emulsification; and
  - b. Dry ingredients, including spices, breading materials, and those used in injection solution preparations.
3. Observing the use and storage of any hazardous or cleaning materials in the establishment, particularly those used in clean-in-place systems;
4. Verifying the control of laboratory reagents and cultures (if they have an in-house laboratory); and
5. Verifying that the establishment or plant has implemented procedures to identify and control any evidence of product tampering in all product storage areas.

**E. Shipping and Receiving** - To assess the vulnerable points for the Shipping and Receiving FDV task, IPP are to verify that the establishment or plant restricts access to shipping and receiving areas and activities on the premises, including (note: list is not all-inclusive and may not apply to all establishments):

1. Verifying whether the establishment or plant restricts access to loading or shipping docks and has outdoor lighting or security equipment installed;
2. Observing whether the establishment or plant has a means to monitor vehicular traffic in and out of the establishment property, including verifying whether the employees immediately report all

unattended deliveries left on the loading docks or unmarked vehicles parked on the premises to establishment or plant management when observed;

3. Verifying whether the establishment or plant inspects incoming shipments of raw materials, packaging materials, or dry goods and verifies the bill of lading;
4. Verifying whether the establishment or plant secures on-site trailers used to store dry or refrigerated materials, and whether staff routinely check the trailers' physical integrity (e.g., locks, seals, and general condition); and
5. Verifying whether the establishment or plant ensures that the bill of lading matches the actual product ordered and received, and whether employees randomly examine a portion of the received shipment.

**F. Re-inspection/Staging areas** - To assess the vulnerable points for the Re-inspection/Staging Areas FDV task, IPP are to verify whether the establishment or plant restricts access and associated activities in these areas, including (note: list is not all-inclusive and may not apply to all establishments or plants):

1. Verifying whether the establishment or plant restricts access to re-inspection and staging areas by unauthorized individuals (including employees or maintenance workers);
2. Verifying whether the establishment or plant has a system in place to monitor security in re-inspection and staging areas (e.g., camera surveillance, color-coded uniforms, identification badges, or sign-out sheets); and
3. Checking the product for evidence of attempted or intentional adulteration, especially when exposed products are being handled (e.g., raw and processed product handling).

**IX. FREQUENCY AND NUMBER OF FDV TASKS**

Table 1 provides the frequency for which IPP and import inspection personnel are to perform FDV tasks.

**Table 1  
Frequency and Number of FDV Tasks Based on Threat Notification Status**

<b>Establishment/Plant Details*</b>	<b>No Threat Notification has been Issued</b>	<b>Elevated Threat Notification has been Issued</b>	<b>Imminent Threat Notification has been Issued</b>
Domestic establishments producing any non-thermally processed shelf-stable product (i.e., most vulnerable) in a combined volume greater than 12,000 lbs/day for meat and poultry or 8,000 lbs/day for egg products (i.e., high volume)	One per week	Four per day <i>(in addition to the routinely scheduled weekly task)</i>	Four per day <i>(in addition to the routinely scheduled weekly task)</i>
Domestic establishments producing any non-thermally processed shelf-stable product (i.e., most vulnerable) in a combined volume less than 12,000 lbs/day for meat and poultry or 8,000 lbs/day for egg products (i.e., low volume)	One per week	Two per day <i>(in addition to the routinely scheduled weekly task)</i>	Four per day <i>(in addition to the routinely scheduled weekly task)</i>

Establishment/Plant Details*	No Threat Notification has been Issued	Elevated Threat Notification has been Issued	Imminent Threat Notification has been Issued
Domestic establishments producing thermally processed shelf-stable products (i.e., least vulnerable), regardless of volume	One per week	Two per day (in addition to the routinely scheduled weekly task)	Four per day (in addition to the routinely scheduled weekly task)

*\*Frequency of task performance based on nature of the food product and product volume, recognizing that certain product types produced at higher volumes may be more vulnerable to intentional adulteration. For establishments producing multiple product types and volumes, additional tasks should be scheduled based on the most vulnerable product produced (i.e., non-thermally processed shelf-stable product and products produced at a higher volume per day).*

A. When a threat notification is issued, the IIC will receive specific instructions from the Meat Inspection Office on other measures, if any, that he or she is to take based on information received about the specific threat to a product or process.

B. If specific information is available, the Office is to deploy IPP to establishments or plants producing the products named in the threat notification to ensure that VAAFM has an on-site presence during any type of operational activity.

C. When a threat has been issued, in addition to routinely scheduled FDV tasks, IPP are to schedule the prescribed number of directed FDV tasks, identified in Table 1, to their task calendar for the types of product being produced and claim those tasks that day, unless otherwise directed.

#### **X. FOOD DEFENSE VERIFICATION TASKS IN FACILITIES PAYING FEES FOR INSPECTION SERVICE**

In facilities that pay a fee for inspection services, in accordance with 9 CFR Parts 350, 351, 352, and 354, no FDV tasks will be assigned. However, these facilities are urged to develop a functional FDP, and management can ask the meat inspection office for assistance to review their written plan to determine whether they have developed a functional FDP.

#### **XI. DOCUMENTING FOOD DEFENSE VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES**

A. PHIS will automatically generate the minimum number of routine FDV tasks to the Establishment task list (one per week), unless a threat notification is issued (see Section IX).

B. After scheduling tasks to their PHIS task calendar, IPP are to perform the FDV task and document their findings in the following manner:

1. Under the “Vulnerable Points” (Vul Pts) tab, check the boxes for each vulnerable point verified. IPP only verify and check the boxes for the vulnerable points that are applicable to the establishment’s operation, and that they observed when conducting the task;
2. Under the “Activity” tab, select the applicable Verification Activity (Review & Observation, Record Keeping, Both);
3. If IPP do not find a food defense vulnerability or concern, they are to record the task as performed by clicking on the “Inspection Completed” box and then “Save;”
4. If IPP identify a food defense vulnerability or concern, and there is no evidence of product adulteration, they are to document their findings and complete a Food Defense MOI as follows, after first discussing their findings with establishment or plant management:

- a. Under the “Findings” tab, check the “Non-Regulatory Concerns” box;
- b. In the “Comments” box, add a brief description of the non-regulatory vulnerability point of concern observed;
- c. Record the task as performed by clicking on the “Inspection Completed” box and then Click “Save;”
- d. Click on the “Create/Edit MOI” button (this button is only available after saving the inspection task with a non-regulatory concern checked) to activate the MOI page:

**OFO MOI IPP Instructions (for Domestic Establishments):**

- i. Click on “Add Food Defense OFO” to open the “Domestic Food Defense MOI” page to access key functions of the MOI;
  - ii. Under the “Status” tab, select attendees with left mouse click on attendee’s name. To select more than one attendee, hold “Ctrl” on keyboard while left clicking on each applicable name. All other information is automatically filled in;
  - iii. Under the “Category” tab, choose the appropriate potential vulnerability (No product adulteration observed), the occurrence (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>), the establishment size (very small, small, or large), and establishment type (meat, poultry, egg products, or equine);
  - iv. Under the “Product” tab, select applicable Product Types;
  - v. Under either the “Processing” or “Storage” tab, identify the vulnerability point or concern;
  - vi. Under the “Response” tab, record Plant Management Response to the vulnerability or concern identified, if applicable; and
  - vii. Check the “Finalize” box and then click “Save” to complete the Food Defense MOI (FSIS Form 5420-1). At the next weekly meeting, provide a finalized copy of the Food Defense MOI to establishment management. Discuss the food defense findings with management, including its proposed mitigation actions, and document in the weekly meeting memorandum.
5. When IPP and import inspection personnel perform a FDV task and find that there is a food defense vulnerability or concern, and there is evidence of product adulteration (e.g., regulatory non-compliance), IPP will schedule and perform a directed HACCP, Sanitation SOP, or other appropriate inspection task to record the observed non-compliance citing the applicable regulation. IPP are to:
- a. Immediately retain the affected product by attaching a retain tag or detain tag, then notify establishment or plant management and discuss the findings;
  - b. After informing establishment or plant management, report any potentially significant incidents through supervisory channels;
  - c. Add the appropriate inspection verification task (according to VT Directive 5500.2) to the task calendar in PHIS, perform the task, and document the observed product contamination in a Noncompliance Record (NR), citing the applicable regulation in accordance to [FSIS Directive 5000.1](#), *Verifying an Establishment’s Food Safety System*.

- d. Complete the food defense task in PHIS. Refer to Section XI, B of this directive for instructions on completing the task. IPP are to mark “Adulterated Product Observed” for Category of Potential Vulnerability when completing the MOI.
- e. After completing the MOI, IPP are to immediately provide a finalized copy to establishment or plant management and inform management that a NR will also be issued describing the adulterated product and potential vulnerability point or concern.

## **XII. FOOD DEFENSE PLAN SURVEY**

A. FSIS has conducted FDP surveys since August 2006. The purpose of the survey is to determine whether an establishment has a written FDP, and, if so, whether the plan is functional (i.e., the measures in the plan have been implemented and tested periodically, and the plan is reviewed at least annually). In 2006, only 36% of the establishments surveyed had a functional FDP. The Agency uses the results of each FDP survey to guide outreach efforts, develop or revise food defense tools (e.g., food defense plans, worksheets, checklists, and fact sheets), or revise FDV tasks.

B. At least annually, IPP will receive an alert through PHIS indicating the FDP survey task has been added to the establishment task list. When IPP open the inspection results page for a particular inspection task after receiving the alert, the “Qnaire” tab will be active, indicating the presence of a questionnaire.

C. Only one survey is to be completed per establishment or plant. In establishments or plants with multiple inspectors assigned, the immediate supervisor will determine to whom the task will be assigned.

D. To complete the FDP survey task, IPP are to:

1. Look for the task “Food Defense Survey” on their task list and schedule it on their task calendar, then claim the task when they are ready to conduct the task;
2. Select the “Qnaire” tab for access to the questionnaire. Any questionnaire associated with a task will appear under the tab labeled “Qnaire” on the task results page. If there is no questionnaire associated with an inspection task, the “Qnaire” tab will be inactive (“grayed out”). At this time, questionnaires cannot be accessed when PHIS is operating in the disconnected state. IPP are to enter the answers to PHIS questionnaires when they have access to the FSIS network;
3. The Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) will add the text of the questionnaire to the “Inspector Guidance” field for the associated inspection task. This action will allow IPP to preview the questions and enable them to gather the required information prior to completing the inspection task;
4. Select the first question, record the answer, click “Save,” and proceed to the next question. IPP and import inspection personnel are to complete all questions and are not leave any blank or unanswered;
5. Record the task as completed after the survey results have been entered;
6. IPP are to complete the food defense plan survey in lieu of performing one FDV task.
7. IPP are only to complete one survey per establishment. In multiple shift establishments, the immediate supervisor is to determine whether the survey is conducted on the AM or the PM shift and which CSI is to conduct the food defense survey task. All other IPP within these establishments who are not assigned to complete the survey are to schedule the task to their calendar, mark the task as “Not performed,” and select the justification “Task assigned to another inspector.”

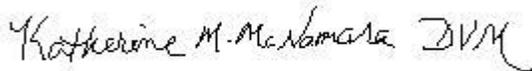
8. Relief IPP assigned to an establishment with one shift are to conduct the food defense survey task the first week they are assigned to the establishment if the task has not already been conducted by the assigned IPP or import inspection personnel.

### **XIII. SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. "Supervisory personnel" refers to any personnel that supervise IPP who conduct FDV tasks.
- B. The supervisor plays a key role in ensuring that decisions made by IPP are consistent with statutory authority and Agency policy, and that duties are performed in accordance with prescribed inspection methods and procedures addressed in this directive.
- C. Supervisory personnel are to discuss the key points identified in this directive with IPP. In addition, supervisory personnel are to review the following with IPP:
  1. The frequency and number of FDV tasks that are required to be performed by IPP for each establishment or plant to which they are assigned.
  2. How to determine the frequency and number of FDV tasks to be performed if a threat notification is issued, per Table 1, Section IX.
- D. Supervisory personnel are to ensure that IPP are correctly applying the verification methodology presented in this directive, making informed decisions, properly documenting findings, and taking the appropriate enforcement actions as instructed in this directive.
- E. Supervisory personnel are to refer to the current version of the FSIS Guide for Conducting In-Plant Performance System Assessments for additional guidance and instructions.

### **XIV. QUESTIONS**

**Questions can be referred to the meat inspection office at 802-828-2426.**

Handwritten signature of Katherine M. McNamara in cursive, followed by the initials "DM".

**Head of Service**

**VT Meat Inspection Service**