

Poultry Post-Mortem Job Aid

Instructions: Review this Job Aid and policy documents, regulations, and inspection methodologies with a mentor.

Acronyms/Definitions

- Post-Mortem (PM) Inspection – The inspection of carcasses and parts after slaughter to ensure they are safe, wholesome, and not adulterated.
- Poultry Inspection Systems – There are six poultry inspection systems: Traditional, Streamlined Inspection System (SIS), New Line Speed Inspection System (NELS), New Turkey Inspection System (NTI), New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS), and Ratite.
- Localized – Not general; restricted to a limited region or to one or more spots.
- Systemic Change – Change that affects the whole body, rather than localized portions.
- Septicemia/Toxemia (Sep/Tox) – Caused by disease-producing bacteria and their toxins in the blood which produce a systemic change in the bird.

Task Overview

- IPP perform poultry PM inspection to ensure that carcasses and parts that enter commerce are wholesome and not adulterated. Carcasses or parts that are unwholesome or adulterated are unfit for human food and cannot enter commerce.
- The specific PM inspection procedures will vary depending on which of the six inspection systems the establishment is using. The procedures in this document apply to inspection systems other than NPIS and ratites.
 - See [FSIS Directive 6170.1](#) for ratite PM inspection procedures.
 - See [FSIS Directive 6500.1](#) for NPIS PM inspection procedures.
- Poultry PM inspection regulations are found in [9 CFR 381.76 – 381.94](#).
- The establishment's responsibilities related to PM inspection:
 - Prepare carcasses for PM inspection using sanitary procedures.
 - Present carcasses and parts for inspection in a specified manner (called "presentation").
 - Provide appropriate inspection stations.

Basic Procedure

- Observe the **overall condition of the carcass** and look for evidence of an abnormal physiological state that would indicate septicemia or toxemia (Sep/Tox). This includes:
 - Unusual dark red, pale, or blue skin or meat color.
 - Drying out of the skin (dehydration).
 - Shrunken appearance (muscle wasting). The keel bone may stick out.
- Observe the **exposed hock joints** for evidence of synovitis (inflammation of hock joint), including inflammation, exudate, and swelling.
- Reflect the flap from the opening cut and **observe the inner surfaces of the carcass** for:
 - Yellow scabbed areas between skin and subcutaneous tissue (may indicate inflammatory process).
 - Exudate in or cloudiness of the air sacs (may indicate airsacculitis).

- Tissue masses or abnormal appearing tissue (may indicate tumors).
 - Swollen, reddened, congested kidneys (may indicate infection or Sep/Tox).
- Examine the **viscera** for:
 - Enlargement or mottling of spleen or liver (may indicate leukosis).
 - Yellow or pale exudate on heart and lungs (may indicate airsacculitis).
 - Hemorrhage, congestion, and swelling of the viscera (may indicate Sept/Tox).
- Observe the **carcass exterior** for:
 - Yellow, crusty skin lesions (may indicate inflammatory process).
 - Emaciation (wasted condition), prominent keel bone, and dark skin and muscle (may indicate Sept/Tox).
 - Skin lesions (e.g., keratoacanthoma).
 - Breast muscle having a white or cooked appearance (may indicate overscald).
 - Cherry red to purple skin on the carcass and neck (may indicate cadaver).
- See [FSIS Directive 6100.3](#) (Sec. V.) for poultry PM inspection procedures. Additional resources:
 - [SIS Poultry Post-Mortem Inspection Procedures](#) (starts at 08:56)
- Instruct the “inspector’s helper” on the **disposition of abnormal or diseased carcasses**.
 - Carcasses showing evidence of Sep/Tox are **condemned** (not for use in human food).
 - **Note:** When a carcass is condemned for Sep/Tox or a generalized condition, its parts are also condemned.
 - In general, if a condition is **localized** and there is not a regulation that requires the carcass to be condemned for the condition, the establishment may **salvage** the carcass (trim away unwholesome or diseased portion of the carcass).
 - **Note:** In some instances, the regulations require condemnation of the entire carcass and parts based on the condition, regardless of whether it is localized (e.g., tuberculosis).
 - Carcasses that are contaminated with digestive tract contents may be rendered unadulterated by prompt washing, trimming, and/or vacuuming (**reprocessing**). Reprocessing is subject to FSIS approval and reinspection.
 - **Note:** A carcass so contaminated that it cannot be inspected or made wholesome is condemned.
 - For more information on the specific disposition of abnormal or diseased carcasses or parts (e.g., airsacculitis, livers, kidneys, ascites, tumors, etc.), see [FSIS Directive 6100.3](#) (Sec. VI.).
- Instruct the “inspector’s helper” on hanging back carcasses/associated viscera (holding carcasses back on a designated rack near the inspection stand) for further correlation with the inspector-in-charge (IIC) when necessary.
 - **Note:** IPP are to immediately report findings to the IIC if they observe signs that may indicate a Foreign Animal Disease or Reportable Condition (conditions such as hemorrhagic septicemia or suspicious or unusual PM findings that do not fit the typical conditions) ([FSIS Directive 6000.1](#), Sec. IV.).

- Document results of PM inspection in PHIS.
 - [Enter the poultry slaughter data](#) (e.g., inspection date, shift, establishment number, specific production/lot number, class of poultry). Data is entered on a per lot basis.
 - Detailed instructions for entering the PM inspection results are found in the [PHIS User Guide](#).
- IICs are authorized to adjust evisceration line speeds, as necessary, since the maximum processing line speeds are only allowed under optimal conditions.
 - Examples of conditions that may warrant a reduced line speed, if in the judgement of the IIC, inspection cannot be adequately performed:
 - A flock has a high number of carcasses with diseases or other conditions.
 - Loss of process control resulting in an excessive number of contaminated carcasses being presented to online IPP.
 - Carcasses not appropriately presented to online IPP.
 - The class of poultry requires additional inspection time.
 - The size or weight of the carcass requires additional inspection time.
 - See [FSIS Directive 6100.3](#) (Sec. VIII.) for policies on adjusting line speed.

Discussion Points

- Discuss the importance of performing a careful PM examination and inspection of the carcasses and parts of each bird.

Knowledge Check

- What poultry PM conditions may warrant condemnation?

Resources

- [FSIS Directive 6100.3](#) – *Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Poultry Inspection*
- [FSIS Directive 6000.1](#) – *Responsibilities Related to Foreign Animal Diseases and Reportable Conditions*