

Steps in Sampling

There are 5 general steps in actually sampling product.

1. Determine which product to sample
2. Notify plant management
3. Collect the sample
4. Pack and mail the sample and form
5. React to the results

Determine Which Product to Sample

FSIS has several sampling programs. CSIs collect RTE samples under the following sampling project codes:

ALLRTE: Inspection personnel *randomly* collect any RTE product (post-lethality exposed RTE product and non-post-lethality exposed RTE product) produced. Exceptions are listed in FSIS Directive 10,210.1.

RTE001: Inspection program personnel follow the risk-based priority list in FSIS Directive 10,240.4, Rev.1 (see below) to determine which type of post-lethality exposed RTE product to select. This sampling project includes **only** the collection of **post-lethality exposed product**. Select the highest risk post-lethality exposed RTE product produced at the time of collection.

RTE001 Priority:

1. Deli-meats that are sliced in the federal establishment
2. Deli-meats shipped whole from the federal establishment (this does not include cook-in-bag products; only those exposed post-lethality)
3. Hot dog products
4. Deli salads, pâtés, and meat spreads
5. Fully cooked type products (other than cooked products in 1-4 above)
6. Fermented products
7. Dried products
8. Products labeled as "Keep Frozen"

Notify Plant Management

Plant management must be notified whenever a sample is going to be taken. This gives management the option of holding the product represented by the sample pending test results. You should notify management enough in advance to allow them to hold the product, but not soon enough to allow them to alter the process. You should discuss the notification timeframe with plant management prior to any sample requests being received in order to have an agreed upon protocol in place.

In the case of RTE products, you must give plant management a handout stating that you will take a sample and that the establishment may wish to voluntarily hold the product pending microbial analyses results.

You should verify that all product represented by the sample (that is, the sampled lot) is held by the establishment, should it elect to do so.

React to Results

Access LEARN to track sample receipt and results. LEARN means Laboratory Electronic Application for Results Notification (see FSIS Directive 10,200.1). LEARN is a computer application that notifies FSIS personnel and establishment management of the receipt and status of samples sent to the FSIS analytical laboratories for testing. LEARN reports when a sample was received at the lab, if it was discarded and the reason for the discard, and the results of the analysis when it is completed.

When a sample is submitted for analysis, you must check LEARN the following day to see that the sample was received and was not discarded. Go to the following address. <http://dchqintra/learn/estindex1.cfm>

When you go to the LEARN address, you have three options.

1. Enter the form number,
2. Enter a single establishment number to obtain all the results in the database for that establishment, or
3. Go to a customizable list of samples for all establishments in a circuit.

Click on "Submit" to see the collection date, the form number, and whether the sample was "Received" or "Not Analyzed".

Once the analyses are complete, the results are posted in the results column. Microbial analyses results are reported as positive or negative and some are also listed as presumptive positive. OCIO-DSMD e-mails sample results to plants that provide their email address, which you can indicate on the PBIS Plant Profile. **You should provide sample result information to establishment management even if the establishment receives e-mail notifications from OCIO-DSMD.**