

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Trader Notice MH 14/2017

To: Food Business Operators at Beef Slaughter and Cutting Plants

Subject: Sampling for the National Baseline Survey on STEC in Raw Beef

Introduction

The objective of the study is to assess the national prevalence of eight STEC serovars (O157, O26, O45, O103, O111, O121, O145, O104) in Irish beef carcasses and on beef intended for grinding. The approach used in the study will be in line with USDA-FSIS guidelines so the data can be used to support US market access for Irish beef. However, this national prevalence data on STEC on beef will also provide data supporting access to other markets and will demonstrate sound science underpinning Irish beef safety.

A total of 24 DAFM approved exporting beef slaughterhouses are required to participate in the survey, with sampling distributed equally through plants and evenly distributed for one year. It is planned that each plant will carry out one sampling event roughly every two weeks for the duration of the survey i.e. 24 sampling events per plant. In total 576 sampling events are envisaged. The samples consist of carcass swabs and meat samples. A *sampling event* involves taking carcass swabs and meat samples in the same week. The swabbing technique is based on the US national survey. Beef intended for grinding is to be sampled using the N60 composite sampling procedure as described below.

Notification of Sampling

FBOs will be informed on the previous Friday before the sampling week of the day of sampling i.e. Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday (in some cases) and on the morning of the chosen day the random carcass number will be generated and the FBO informed. Random box numbers will be selected for N60 sampling when the range of available box numbers in the lot is made available

Role of the Food Business Operator

FBOs are required to co-operate with the National Baseline Survey. FBOs must draft an SOP in consultation with the Official Veterinarian to cover at least the following:

- a) That assistance will be offered (where required) to DAFM staff carrying out carcass swabbing or N60 sampling.
- b) That the size of batches or lots presented for official N60 sampling will be defined and there is no associated product. A minimum of 48 boxes in the lot is suggested.
- c) That swabbed carcasses and sampled meat lots will be securely detained until the results are known.
- d) That in the event of a positive result, the carcass or positive lot of meat will be dealt with in accordance with **VPN 1/2017**. This includes any corrective or preventive action required.

Actions pending receipt of results

Carcases and lots of meat which have been subject to sampling should be handled in such a way that corrective actions can be taken if a positive is detected; the FBO must hold the sampled carcase and lot of meat pending receipt of results. It is the responsibility of the FBO to ensure that a reliable system is in place for holding the goods pending receipt of results.

If there is a delay in receiving confirmatory test results, FBOs may request permission to bone detained carcasses under controlled conditions. VIs may permit this on a case by case basis.

Laboratory testing and reporting of official DAFM samples:

Samples taken as part of the official DAFM program will be sent to VPHRL for testing. Results will be reported back to the veterinary office in a timely manner. Any positive results will also be reported to VPHIS HQ. DAFM staff will inform the FBO on the same day as results are received.

Action to be taken in the event of a positive result

If the result of the carcase or N60 sample test is confirmed positive by the VPHRL the FBO and VPHIS staff must follow the procedures described in [VPN01_2017](#)

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18th August 2017