

APPROVED

Federal Purchase Program Specification (FPPS) for Bison Handling and Welfare

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
Livestock and Poultry (LP) Program
Standards and Specifications Division (SSD)
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Supersedes: FPPS - Bison Handling and Welfare – [March 2022](#) - changes from previous requirements in [blue](#)

Effective: [April 2026](#)

100 General

101 This document is for use by the Department of Agriculture (USDA), AMS, LP Program to ensure that the bison handling and welfare requirements for federal nutrition assistance programs reflect industry best practices.

110 Program Approach

111 All bison harvest facilities that supply raw materials from bison for the production of AMS destined finished products must develop and implement a written program that is consistent with a systematic approach to humane bison handling and welfare as outlined in 69 FR 54625. The program will ensure proper bison handling and welfare techniques are conducted from the time the transportation conveyance enters the facility's premises through the stunning and exsanguination of the bison.

120 Program Submission

121 The program will be submitted as a supporting document to the organization's approved technical proposal and must address the requirements outlined in **Section 200 – 241** ([Sections 300 & 400 are not required to be listed in the contractor's technical proposal – these sections are provided for information only.](#))

200 Program Components

201 The contractor must ensure that any facility that harvests bison has a:

210 Management Commitment

- 211 Steering Committee (internal) which is ultimately accountable for bison handling and welfare initiatives within the organization.
- 212 Mission Statement on bison handling and welfare that is distributed to all employees and conspicuously displayed at the premises.

220 Training Program ^{1,2}

- 221 Training program on Bison Handling and Welfare that:
 - 221.1 Is provided to all employees interacting with bison;
 - 221.2 Covers the [Meat Institute Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide: A Systematic Approach to Animal Welfare](#);
 - 221.3 Training is facilitated by an employee that has earned and maintained a certification of bison handling and welfare training, such as that offered through the Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO) or an equivalent;
 - 221.4 Is conducted no less frequently than once a year for each designated employee; and
 - 221.5 Requires signed documentation from each employee and confirmation by signature of the designated, certified trainer upon successful completion of training.

230 Quality Management Plan ^{1,2}

- 231 Written quality management plan (internal) which addresses all provisions of Chapter 4: Transportation Audit Guidelines, 7 Core Criteria and Chapter 5: Auditing Animal Handling and Stunning, 7 Core Criteria, of the [Meat Institute Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide: A Systematic Approach to Animal Welfare](#), found at the following web site address:
 - 231.1 https://www.meatinstitute.org/Animal_Welfare/Guidelines_and_Audits
- 232 This internal quality management plan must also provide for routine assessment and monitoring of humane handling through the use of a numerical scoring system conducted by a trained employee.

¹Guidlines and audit criteria specified for cattle in Chapter 4: Transportation Audit Guidelines, 7 Core Criteria and Chapter 5: Auditing Animal Handling and Stunning, 7 Core Criteria, of the [Meat Institute Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide](#): should be emulated, to the extent possible, for bison.

²Core Criteria 5: Vocalization in Chapter 5: Auditing Animal Handling and Stunning 7 Core Criteria of the [Meat Institute Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines and Audit Guide](#) shall be amended so that vocalization *only* is evaluated at the lead up chute prior to the restrainer with five percent or less vocalization being an acceptable score. Grunting should not be counted.

233 All bison harvest facilities that supply raw materials for the production of AMS destined finished products must have a fully functioning back-up stunning device onsite wherever bison stunning is performed.

240 Regulatory Oversight

241 Bison/carcasses that are inspected and passed by the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) are eligible for AMS purchase programs.

Sections 300 – 400 are provided for contractors' information only.

300 Program Evaluation and Eligibility

301 The program will be audited (external) by AMS or a firm accredited by AMS. The accreditation of the firm will be conducted by the Quality Assessment Division (QAD) through the USDA ISO Guide 17065 Program.

302 Audit findings will be communicated to the establishment's FSIS Inspector in Charge (IIC) or designee.

310 Audit Format

311 Audits will be conducted utilizing the following format:

312 Transportation Segment (**Chapter 4: Meat Institute Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide: A Systematic Approach to Animal Welfare**).

312.1 Audited organizations must pass Core Criteria 1 and 6 with a minimum scoring of excellent, Core Criteria 2 through 5 with a minimum scoring of acceptable and Core Criteria 7 must be adhered to with full compliance (zero tolerance) each time an audit is performed.^{1,2}

313 **Animal Handling and Stunning Segment** (**Chapter 5: Meat Institute Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide: A Systematic Approach to Animal Welfare**).

313.1 Audited organizations must adhere to Core Criteria 1, 2, 6 and 7 with full compliance (zero tolerance) and to Core Criteria 3, 4 and 5 with a minimum scoring of Acceptable each time an audit is performed.^{1,2,3}

¹Guidlines and audit criteria specified for cattle in Chapter 4: Transportation Audit Guidelines, 7 Core Criteria and Chapter 5: Auditing Animal Handling and Stunning, 7 Core Criteria, of the NAMI *Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide*: should be emulated, to the extent possible, for bison.

²Core Criteria 5: Vocalization in Chapter 5: Auditing Animal Handling and Stunning 7 Core Criteria of the AMI *Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines and Audit Guide* shall be amended so that vocalization *only* is evaluated at the lead up chute prior to the restrainer with five percent or less vocalization being an acceptable score. Grunting should not be counted.

³Religious harvest (Kosher and Halal) shall be exempt from the AMS auditing of Core Criteria 6: Effective Stunning.

313.2 The auditor shall inform FSIS and organization officials in writing of all audit findings, including any observations of missed stuns and/or bison regaining sensibility following stunning, upon completion of the audit during the exit interview.

320 Initial Audit

321 Initial audit must be performed prior to award of contracts.

330 Audit Failure

331 If an audit fails for any of the Core Criteria, the organization is not eligible to provide product until such a time that corrective and preventative actions are approved by SSD, implemented and proven effective.

340 Audit Frequency and Status

341 Standard - Until four (4) consecutive successfully passed audits are attained, an audit must be conducted within three (3) months of the previous audit.

342 Monthly - If at any time an audit identifies any of the Core Criteria not meeting the pass requirements while in the Standard phase, auditing will be required to be conducted on a monthly basis once corrective and preventative actions have been approved by the SSD, implemented and proven effective. This schedule will be for a period of time until four (4) successive audits are found to meet the passing requirements noted in **Section 310 – Audit Format**; at which time audits shall be conducted on the Standard basis.

343 If four (4) successfully conducted audits are sequentially completed within a one-year period while in Standard auditing phase, the facility may move to a Semi-Annual audit basis.

344 Semi-Annual - Semi-annual audits may continue until such time that a failed audit is reported or a period of greater than six (6) months has elapsed without any audits being performed; at which time the audits must resume as described for Standard audits.

345 For-Cause – Any official enforcement actions issued by FSIS for missed stuns or for an animal regaining sensibility following stunning shall result in an immediate for-cause bison handling and welfare audit by AMS. Subsequent audit frequency will be determined by results of the AMS audit, as described above.

400 Standards and Specifications Division

- 401 SSD can declare an organization's Bison Handling and Welfare Program out of compliance at any time.
- 402 The organization shall immediately notify the SSD when any bison handling, and welfare official enforcement action is issued by FSIS.