



POULTRY PRODUCTS LABORATORY SAMPLE INTEGRITY

Policy

This instruction defines procedures for handling poultry products for laboratory samples.

Procedure

Whenever official samples are required for official analysis or for supervisory review, the grader must select the samples and maintain their integrity during the entire time they remain in the official plant. The required procedures for handling and shipping these samples are listed in this instruction.

I. Drawing, Marking, Handling, and Shipping Samples

Duplicate or reserve samples shall be drawn on product being sampled for laboratory analysis. However, these samples may be used only as replacements for samples which are lost in shipment or arrive at the laboratory in an unsatisfactory condition for testing. Since duplicate samples are also considered official samples, they must be kept in the custody of the grader until official analyses are completed.

Each sample container shall be legibly labeled. Writing directly on the container is not satisfactory because the writing may smear when frozen product defrosts. The wording on the label should be printed or typed. The label will show the name and address of the firm, plant number, date processed, name of product, USDA lot numbers, sample and subplot numbers, if applicable, and analyses requested, when applicable.

II. In-plant Sample Storage

A. Frozen Samples

A ventilated sample box with a USDA-approved locking device shall be provided by the official plant for holding samples in a freezer. This box or container must be locked with an official USDA lock. It must be stationary so it cannot be removed from the freezer or can only be removed by a USDA employee. This can be accomplished by a permanent mounting, locking the box to a support post with an official lock, or any other like method approved by the supervisor.

B. Samples Which Do Not Require Freezing

When practical, samples which do not require freezing shall be kept in the official USDA file. However, if space is a problem due to large numbers or bulky samples, the official plant shall provide a separate sample storage facility. Such satellite facilities must be equipped with a USDA-approved method of locking, locked with an official USDA lock, located in an acceptable area of the plant (not exposed to excessive cold, heat, and/or humidity), and made stationary in a similar manner as outlined in paragraph A above.



III. Sampling Plan – Laboratory Analysis

A. Guidelines

Graders may be required to select, prepare, and submit samples of poultry products produced for contract acceptance certification. The certifications will be for specific chemical or microbiological analysis listed in the specification document. The procedures used for sample selection, preparation, and submission are critical to assure accurate results. Some specifications have specific guidelines and procedures for laboratory analysis. For specifications requiring laboratory analysis but without any specific procedures, use the following guidelines:

1. Graders shall randomly select finished primary containers of product that will be used for sampling. The sample size, unless listed in the specification, will be according to the sample size outlined in QAD 615: *Lot Definition* and shall be based on the number of master containers in the lot or subplot. Samples may be selected throughout the day provided the final samples are not selected until the production shift is completed.
2. Plant personnel shall composite the samples into a homogenous mixture under the grader's supervision. Each composite will then be divided into two equal portions resulting in one original and one duplicate or reserve sample. The composites shall be placed in appropriate laboratory sample containers, frozen solidly, and submitted to the laboratory for analysis. Original samples should be packed and shipped so that they arrive at the laboratory in an acceptable state and should be shipped early in the workweek (Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday) so that they do not arrive on a non-workday. Duplicate samples shall be held until results of the original samples have been received.
3. Each sample submitted for laboratory analysis must be accompanied by a Poultry Products Grading Certificate (LP-210P) listing the products and the type of analysis requested. Specific instructions shall be included in the remarks section requesting laboratory personnel to perform the required analysis. (**See Exhibit 1**)
4. When selecting samples for microbiological analysis, graders must be extremely careful not to contaminate or otherwise jeopardize the integrity of the sample. The plant must provide the necessary sterile equipment required to aseptically sample the product. The equipment shall include plastic sterile single-use gloves, disposable facemasks, and sterile single-use scoops, spoons, or other sterile equipment. The grader, or plant personnel under the supervision of the grader, shall sample the product using the described equipment and sanitary methods to prevent any outside contamination.



5. Sampling levels shall be based on the following classes of products:

- a. Class 1 - Franks, sausage links, and other similar types of product. Select a 1-pound sample from the sample master containers. Composite the samples and request analysis on this single sample.
- b. Class 2 - Turkey roll, salami, bologna, ground turkey (in casings), pastrami, ham, and other similar products. Select one whole item from each sample master container. Take 1-pound slices from the center of each sample. Instruct the lab to composite the 1-pound slices and request analysis on this single sample.

IV. Sample Mailing

A. Sealing Methods

In order to maintain sample integrity, all sample shipping containers shall be sealed by the grader prior to mailing or relinquishing control of the sample to management for mailing. All seal numbers shall be recorded in the remarks section of the certificate which accompanies the sample. The laboratory will not analyze samples that are not properly sealed. Optionally, a memorandum containing the above information may accompany samples being shipped to locations other than laboratories. One of the following methods of sealing must be used:

1. External Sealing - After the sample shipping container has been prepared for mailing(samples, dry ice, etc., are already in the container and it is closed and taped for mailing), both the bottom and top of the shipping container shall be continuously strapped with a single piece of 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch nylon reinforced tape or its equivalent. The two ends of this tape are then brought through a serially numbered official USDA "single use" seal and the tape locked inside it when the seal is closed. The seal is then covered with additional tape to protect it during mailing.
2. Internal Sealing
 - a. Method A - A plastic bag is placed inside the sample shipping container and the samples placed inside it. The plastic bag is then closed (twisted as if for a "tie") and taped shut using 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch nylon reinforced tape. The two ends of the tape are brought through a serially numbered official USDA "single use" seal and the tape locked inside it when the seal is closed. The shipping container is then closed and prepared for mailing.
 - b. Method B - When an outer shipping container is used, the samples are packed in the inner shipping container (plastic freezer container, etc.) and that container placed inside a plastic bag. The plastic bag is then sealed as outlined above in paragraph. a. above. The internal shipping container, surrounded by the sealed plastic bag, is then placed in the outer



shipping container for mailing.

- c. Method C - When an outer shipping container is used, the samples are packed in the inner container and that container is then sealed as outlined in paragraph. a. above. The sealed inner container is placed inside the outer shipping container for mailing.
- d. Method D - When a small number of nonfrozen samples (one or two) are mailed to the laboratory, they may be individually sealed as outlined above under paragraph. a. above and then placed in the mailing container.

V. Materials

A. Types

- 1. Tape - Standard ¼-inch to ½-inch nylon reinforced tape may be provided by the official plant, obtained from the State office, or purchased locally by the grader.
- 2. Plastic Bags - Appropriately sized plastic bags shall be provided by the official plant or purchased locally by the grader.
- 3. Official Seals - Official seals are available at the regional office and shall be obtained through the sub-management office. Accountability records are not required, but these serially numbered seals shall be stored in the official USDA file.

Reimbursement arrangements for purchasing supplies may be made through the Federal State office. The above sample control methods will provide adequate protection for official samples from the time of sample drawing until the completion of laboratory analysis or other product examinations, as applicable.

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