INTRODUCTION

Under the Pathogen Reduction/HACCP Regulation, poultry slaughter establishments are required to test carcasses for generic *E. coli* as a means of verifying process control. This document outlines sampling and microbial testing procedures that would meet this requirement. These guidelines may be helpful to your company microbiologist or testing laboratory. This document is a supplement to the Regulation but not a substitute; in-depth details of microbial sampling and testing may be found in the Regulation.

In this protocol, carcass sampling for broiler and turkey carcasses employs the same nondestructive whole bird rinse used in the FSIS Nationwide Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Programs. Poultry carcasses should be sampled at the end of the chill process, after the drip line, and before packing/cut-up. (Hot-boned poultry, which is boned before chilling, should be sampled at the end of the slaughter line instead of at the end of the drip line.) Samples taken in this manner will have analytic results comparable to National Baseline figures.

E. coli test levels from National Baseline studies, expressed as colony forming units per milliliter (cfu/ml) of rinsate, have been separated into 3 categories for the purpose of process control verification: acceptable, marginal, and unacceptable. In the Pathogen Reduction/HACCP Regulation, the upper limits for the acceptable and marginal ranges were denoted by **m** and **M**.

Table 1. Values for Marginal and Unacceptable Results for *E. coli* performance criteria

Type of Poultry	Acceptable Range	Marginal Range	Unacceptable Range
Chicken	100 cfu/ml or less	over 100 cfu/ml but not over 1,000 cfu/ml	above 1,000 cfu/ml
Turkey	NA *	NA *	NA *

* The FSIS Baseline study has not been completed for this type of poultry. Levels will be set upon completion of this baseline.

The *E. coli* test results for a chicken slaughter establishment will be acceptable if not above 100 cfu/ml, marginal if above 100 cfu/ml but not above 1,000 cfu/ml, and unacceptable if above 1,000 cfu/ml. To evaluate overall process performance, the establishment must apply verification criteria to a set of samples; see discussion on pp. 14-16.