

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

---

---

# FSIS NOTICE

69-13

10/23/13

---

---

## CONTAINERS FOR USE WHEN COLLECTING RAW BEEF SAMPLES FOR SHIGA TOXIN-PRODUCING *ESCHERICHIA COLI* (STEC) AND *SALMONELLA* TESTING

### I. PURPOSE

A. This notice reissues the content from FSIS Notice 56-12, *Additional Instructions for Use of New Containers when Collecting Raw Ground Beef Samples for E. coli O157:H7 and Salmonella Testing*, with minor clarifications. This notice also incorporates information from FSIS Notice 35-12, *New Containers for Use When Collecting Raw Beef Samples for Escherichia coli (STEC) Testing*. This notice provides instructions to inspection program personnel (IPP) to use Whirl-Pak® bags for collecting samples of beef manufacturing trimmings (MT60), bench trim (MT55), and other raw ground beef components (MT54) for Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) testing. This notice also provides instructions for IPP to collect ground beef product for the MT43 and MT43S sampling programs in its final package whenever available. If ground beef is not available in its final package, or if the final packages are too heavy, the notice provides instructions to collect ground beef product by filling 3 Whirl-Pak® bags to the fill-line.

B. Two attachments are included with the notice. Attachment 1 includes diagrams that illustrate how to use the Whirl-Pak® bags. Attachment 2 shows the supplies used for N60 sampling.

### II. USE OF WHIRL-PAK® BAGS

A. IPP are to use the Whirl-Pak® bags for collecting samples of beef manufacturing trimmings (MT60), bench trim (MT55), and other raw ground beef components (MT54). IPP are to use only the laboratory supplied Whirl-Pak® bags for submitting these samples. IPP are to collect raw ground beef samples (MT43 and MT43S) in the Whirl-Pak® bags only if product is not available in its final packaging, or packages are too heavy.

B. The Whirl-Pak® bags have fill lines to ensure that IPP submit the appropriate amount of product (325g) to the laboratory for analysis.

C. The laboratory will analyze the contents of two bags and hold a third bag as a reserve in case of a need to conduct additional analysis on positive samples.

### III. INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE FILL-LINES ON THE WHIRL-PAK® BAGS WHEN COLLECTING RAW GROUND BEEF, BEEF MANUFACTURING TRIMMINGS, BENCH TRIM, AND OTHER COMPONENTS SAMPLES

A. IPP are to follow the instructions in [FSIS Directive 10,010.1](#), Ch. II., III. and IV., except for the amount of ground beef product collected and the beef manufacturing trimming instructions under Ch. II., IV., B., 9 of that directive. The FSIS laboratories require that IPP submit two pounds of product under all of the STEC testing programs. IPP are to place 30 pieces in each of the two Whirl-Pak® bags for the sampling programs that use the N60 collection method (MT60 and MT55, unless the

---

**DISTRIBUTION:** Electronic

**NOTICE EXPIRES:** 11/1/14

**OPI:** OPPD

bench trim pieces are too small; see paragraph C of this section for instructions to follow when bench trim pieces are too small).

B. IPP will receive Whirl-Pak® bags in the supply boxes. When collecting MT60, MT55, MT43, and MT43S samples (when raw ground beef product is not available in its final package, or packages are too heavy), IPP are to collect sufficient product to fill the three provided Whirl-Pak® bags up to the fill-line indicated on the bag. IPP are not to underfill or overfill the bag. See Section V. of this notice for information on how to request the Whirl-Pak® bags for sampling.



Figure 1. Three Whirl-Pak® bags with MT55, MT60, or MT54 sample

C. When collecting only smaller pieces of bench trim for a grab sample, IPP are to place the smaller pieces in the 3 bags. When the bag is closed, the product should meet the line indicated on the bag (see Attachment 1). IPP do not need to cut or trim the additional pieces. IPP are to grab smaller pieces.



Figure 2. Grab samples of bench trim when pieces are too small for N60 sampling<sup>1</sup>

D. When sampling raw ground beef components other than trim (MT54), IPP may need to cut the other components (e.g., head meat, cheek meat, weasand, or heart) into smaller pieces to fit into the Whirl-Pak® bags. For these components, IPP are to continue to follow FSIS Directive 10,010.1 as written and ensure that the product in the bags falls between the fill line and at least 2 inches of space remains in the top of the Whirl-Pak® bag to avoid overfill and leakage incidents.



Figure 3. Three Whirl-Pak® bags with other raw ground beef component (MT54) sample

E. IPP are to carefully squeeze out the air remaining in the bag and tightly fold over the top at least four times as trapped air and loose seals may lead to leakage. IPP are to fold over the side tabs to secure the folds in place and not tie the ends. These steps will ensure a successful sample collection process and decrease the number of sample discards.

F. IPP are to place all 3 Whirl-Pak® bags in a secondary containment bag and seal following [FSIS Directive 7355.1](#). Use of Sample Seals for Laboratory Samples and Other Applications.

G. IPP are to push the foam plug of the shipping container down firmly against the sample and frozen gel pack to keep the sample and supplies in place during shipment and to help maintain the temperature of the sampled product. IPP are to ensure that the FedEx stamp placed on the shipping container matches the requesting FSIS laboratory listed as item 5 in the Collection Information block on the submission form (PHIS Form 8000-18).

#### IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLECTING RAW GROUND BEEF (MT43 AND MT43S) SAMPLES

A. IPP are to collect ground beef samples for the MT43 and MT43S sampling programs that are in their final package, whenever possible.



Figure 4. Raw ground beef in its final packaging

B. IPP are to put the product in its final packaging in the larger, non-sterile bag provided with the sampling supplies. IPP are to collect the appropriate number of packaged products, so that the

sample equals two pounds. For example, in Figure 5, two 1-pound packages are included in the larger, non-sterile bag.



Figure 5. Raw ground beef sample when product is available in its final packaging

C. For product in its final packaging, IPP do not use the 3 Whirl-pak® bags displaying a fill-line.

D. If product is not available in the final package or the final package is too heavy, IPP are to collect grab samples using the technique described in Section III. In this situation, IPP are to use the 3 Whirl-pak® bags and fill the 3 Whirl-pak® bags to the fill-line as shown in the picture below. Filling each of the 3 Whirl-pak® bags to the fill line results in approximately a 2-pound sample of ground beef product. IPP do not need to weigh the sample.



Figure 6. Raw ground beef sample when product is not available in its final packaging or packages are too heavy

E. IPP are to collect a 2-pound sample of ground beef either in the final package, if available, or by using the 3 Whirl-pak® bags displaying a fill-line regardless of whether they receive an MT43 sampling task or both an MT43 and MT43S sampling task. IPP who receive both an MT43 and MT43S sampling task are to complete and ship two sample request forms (one for MT43 and one for MT43S sampling task) with one product sample.

## V. REQUESTING SAMPLING SUPPLIES

A. Routinely, the FSIS laboratories will send sampling boxes with Whirl-Pak® bags and other supplies to IPP in the field for sampling. However, IPP are to request Whirl-Pak® bags whenever needed. IPP are to request supplies via e-mail at least 1 week before sampling is to begin. IPP are to e-mail any of the three FSIS laboratories by using one of the following e-mail addresses:

1. FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Eastern Laboratory;
2. FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Midwestern Laboratory; or

3. FSIS - Sampling Supplies – Western Laboratory.

B. IPP are to include the following information in the supply request e-mail:

1. The exact supplies needed;
2. IPP name;
3. Establishment address (not a P.O. Box); and
4. Establishment phone number.

C. For N60 sampling tools, send an email to “FSIS - Sampling Supplies –Western Laboratory” and request the specific supply items that you need, making sure you indicate that you need the items for the N60 collection method (Attachment 2).

## VI. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this notice to the Risk, Innovations, and Management Staff through [askFSIS](#) or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935. When submitting a question, use the Submit a Question tab, and enter the following information in the fields provided:

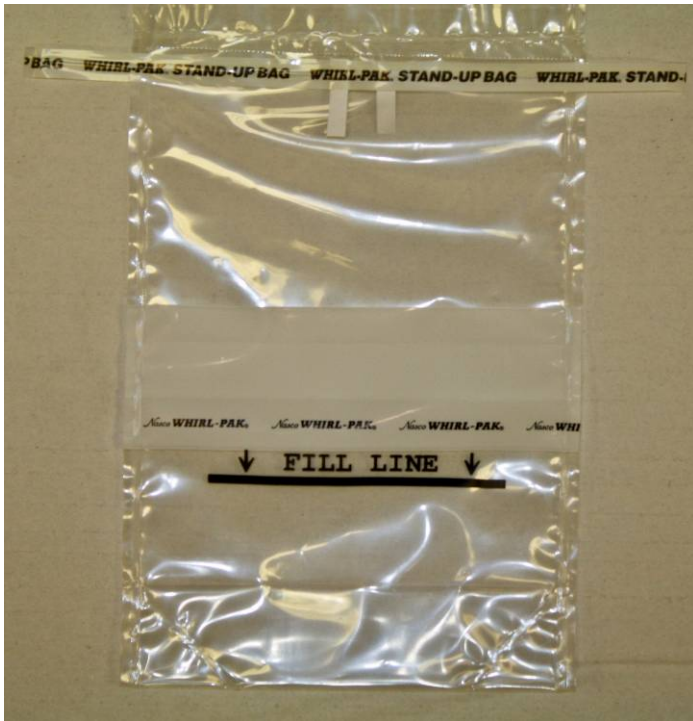
Subject Field: Enter **Notice 69-13**  
Question Field: Enter question with as much detail as possible.  
Product Field: Select **General Inspection Policy** from the drop-down menu.  
Category Field: Select **Sampling E. coli O157:H7** from the drop-down menu.  
Policy Arena: Select **Domestic (U.S.) only** from the drop-down menu.

When all fields are complete, press **Continue**.

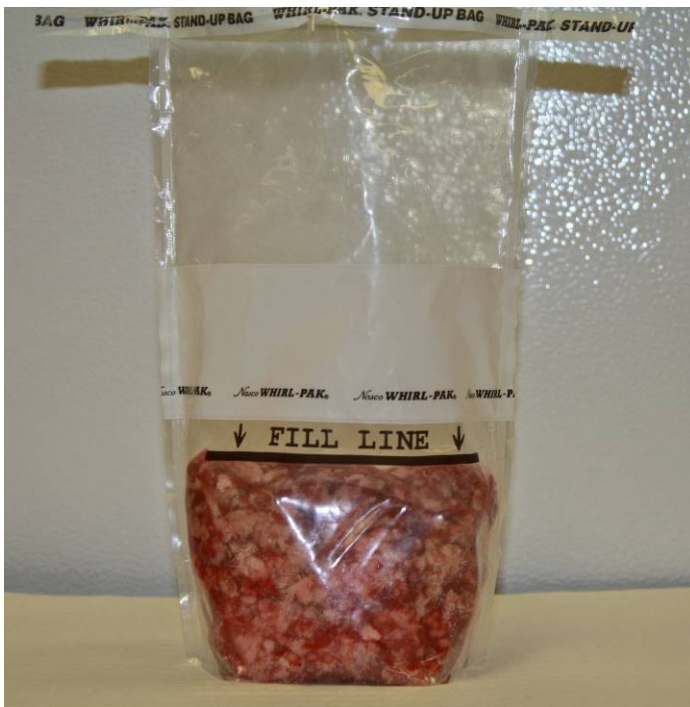


Assistant Administrator  
Office of Policy and Program Development

## Supplies – Proper Filling and Closing of Fill-line Whirl-Pak® Bag Sampling



- a. Remove the tear strip from the top and pull apart the two small white tabs to open the bag. The interior of the bag is sterile so be careful not to touch the inside.



- b. The bag has a gusseted bottom so that once IPP add product it will stand upright.

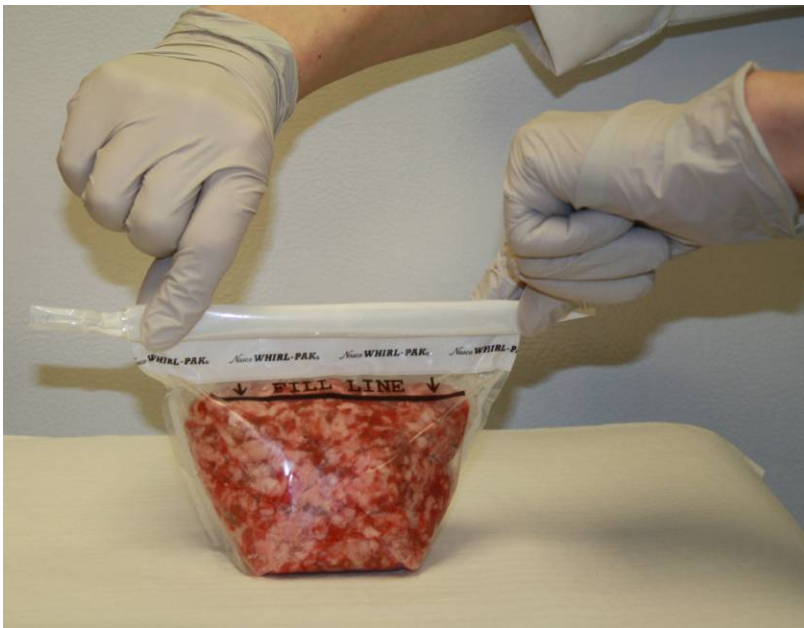




c. Carefully squeeze out the air remaining in the bag as trapped air may lead to leakage.



d. Tightly fold over the top at least four times.



e. Fold over the side tabs to secure the folds in place. Do not tie the ends.



### N60 Beef Trim Sampling Supplies

IPP may use a plastic caddy, boning knife, hook, forceps, sterile gloves, plastic bags, and three Whirl-Pak® bags when collecting boneless beef trim using the N60 collection method (see [FSIS Directive 10,010.1](#), Attachment 8). Also available from the FSIS laboratories are sampling templates, cut resistant mesh gloves, and additional Whirl-Pak® bags. The fill-lines on the Whirl-Pak® bags will allow the collector to assess visually the number and size of sample pieces they are collecting and achieve the targeted 60 pieces of 1 x 3 inches of trim.



Sampling Caddy, Clip, Bags, Knife, Boning Hook, Template, Gloves, and Steel

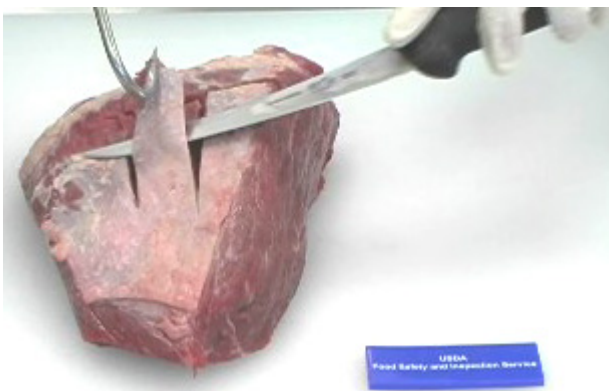


### **Steel, Boning Knife, Sampling Template, Boning Hook, Forceps, and Mesh Glove**

The Whirl-Pak® bags have fill-lines marked on them to ensure that IPP obtain the appropriate amount of sample to submit to the laboratory for analysis.

The total weight of the sample of boneless beef trimmings submitted to the FSIS field laboratories will be approximately 2 lb. of product.

IPP are to cut 60 pieces of trim from 60 different pieces of beef trim. IPP will cut each of those pieces to a size of approximately 1 inch wide by 3 inches long.



A short boning hook may be more useful to manipulate and secure large, heavy pieces of trim than a standard meat inspection hook. IPP may find it more useful to use the standard meat inspection hook for anchoring and repositioning of the smaller pieces of trim see [FSIS Directive 10,010.1](#), Attachment 8.



### **Using Forceps to Grasp Smaller Pieces of Beef Trim**

Rat toothed forceps are helpful to grasp smaller trim pieces.



### **Using a template to measure the pieces of beef trim**

It is important that IPP keep the strips of boneless beef trim very thin, and that IPP submit only the surface of product for analysis. Lightly scoring two parallel lines approximately an inch apart and 3-4 inches long on the surface of a piece of trim may facilitate stripping off the appropriate width and length piece of surface area from each section of beef trim selected for sampling (see [FSIS Directive 10,010.1](#), Ch. II, IV, B 8).