

USDA Pushes Back Against Washington Post Over New Swine Slaughter Inspection System

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- On February 1, 2018, FSIS put forward a [proposed rule](#) to establish a voluntary, opt-in inspection system for market hog slaughter establishments, called the New Swine Slaughter Inspection System (NSIS). Under the proposed rule, hog slaughter plants may voluntarily join a new inspection system whereby establishment personnel would be responsible for sorting and removing unfit animals and identifying defects before FSIS inspection. FSIS inspectors who currently perform this function would be moved to other areas of the plant focused more on food safety. FSIS online inspectors would be reduced to a maximum of three per line per shift. The rule also specifically proposes to lift caps on line speeds in processing plants.
- On April 3, the Washington Post published an article critiquing the proposed NSIS, "[Pork industry soon will have more power over meat inspections](#)." The article states that the "power and responsibility for food safety inspection in hog plants" is planned to shift to the pork industry, cutting the number of federal inspectors by 40 percent and replacing them with plant employees. The article uses USDA's proposal to highlight what it considers a larger issue: the acceleration of the federal government's move toward deregulation and reducing regulations.
- In an unusual move for the agency, on April 8, 2019, FSIS released a response to the article, condemning it for false reporting. Specifically, FSIS clarified that only federal inspectors perform meat inspections and will continue to conduct 100% ante-mortem inspections and 100% carcass-by-carcass inspection at post-mortem. The agency will make staff determinations on a case-by-case basis and will not be decreasing inspectors by 40 percent. Under the proposal, establishment employees sort market hogs before FSIS inspection, which is consistent with current policy for establishments under traditional inspection. You can find FSIS's response to the Washington Post and clarifications on the proposed rule [here](#).

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