

## Lm Focus Group Guide (State and Local)

### Introduction (10 minutes):

Hello, I am [name], and we are from USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Within FSIS, we work in the Program Evaluation and Improvement staff. We conduct independent program and process evaluations, as well as focus groups as a regular part of our work, which is why we were asked to conduct this session today.

[Participants introduce themselves]

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. This group is a result of FSIS' work with FDA and CDC to ensure the messaging around *Listeria monocytogenes* control at retail establishments is clear, consistent, and useful. We are conducting these focus groups with you, as well as with retail industry representatives, as well as with small deli owners to gather additional feedback that will help us refine and tailor our Lm-specific outreach methods and products.

We'll be providing you with some background and then focusing our discussion on a few key areas. Specifically, we'll be talking with you about your thoughts on the availability of communication related to Lm, as well as your thoughts about communication specific to Lm. In addition, we'd like to get your feedback on specific pieces of communication that we've developed at FSIS.

Your name will not be attributed to any comments you make, and the focus group data will remain private to the extent permitted by law.

Please note that [name] will be taking notes during the focus group to ensure we adequately capture your ideas during the conversation.

Do you have any questions?

### Opening/background (5 minutes):

*Listeria monocytogenes* is a pathogen of public health concern. We'll be referring to it as 'Lm' or just 'Listeria' during this focus group. This pathogen is of concern because it thrives in foods at refrigeration temperatures. It has been found in the environment in processing plants and at retail, and can cross-contaminate foods. *Listeria* can cause miscarriages among pregnant

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women, as well as severe illness and death among older adults and those with weakened immune systems. Over 90% of those infected are hospitalized, and 20-30% of those infections result in death.

Food prepared at retail establishments are at risk of being contaminated by this pathogen. FSIS conducted a risk assessment that evaluated retail practices and the impact on the risk of listeriosis. This study resulted in the identification of several best practices, recognized by industry and the public health community, to prevent contamination of deli foods.

FSIS has since developed a brochure and other information that it has shared with state and local health departments and retailers to support practices in retail delis to prevent Listeria from contaminating and thriving on deli foods.

**Distribution/availability of communication (30 minutes):**

FSIS wants to ensure the information it provides is clear, practical and useful for retailers, and is working with FDA and CDC to enhance coordination and ensure messaging is consistent and provides the right amount of information. We'd like to get some feedback from each of you to help us tailor what information we provide, how we provide it, and how best to partner to get information out that is practical and useful.

1. How do you generally get information on preventing Listeria contamination of meat and poultry products?

Prompt: from websites, constituent updates, industry association representatives, etc.

2. What other sources have you received or found information?

Prompts:

-Have you asked questions through AskKaren, AskFSIS and/or Small and Very Small Plant Help Desk? If so, was the response helpful? If not, why?

-Do you get information from Cooperative Extensions on controlling Lm at retail delis? If so, what do you find most/least useful?

3. How would this information be best distributed to you in the future?

OR

How could federal organizations (FSIS, FDA, CDC etc.) improve the way we deliver Listeria related communication to you?

4. What specific Listeria related information do you distribute to retail operators?

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- Why have you chosen that specific source? Prompt: It's easy to understand, easily available, etc.
5. From your experience, how would retailers/deli operators prefer to receive Listeria related communication?

### **Lm-specific communication content (15 - 20 minutes):**

FSIS is aware that outreach on retail food safety, including best practices to control and prevent Listeria, may come from state/local health departments, other federal partners (e.g., CDC), Extension personnel, or via private sector/corporate messaging. We'd like to discuss your thoughts on the Lm-specific information you've received in the past.

1. Of the Listeria-specific information you have received,
  - Was the information clear/easy to understand? If not, how so?
  - Was the information helpful/useful? If not, how so?
    - If you found the information to be useful, have you incorporated the recommendations into your inspections? Why or why not?
2. What would you improve about the information?  
Prompts: the format, the content, the mode of communication, etc.
3. What specific aspect of Listeria best practices would you like more communication on?  
Prompts: cleaning of slicers or other equipment, temperature control of deli case, key areas to look for potential cross-contamination (placement of foods in deli case, glove use, etc.)
4. Is the messaging from FSIS related to the control of Listeria in retail delis consistent with information you receive from other regulatory partners (e.g, trade associations (e.g., FMI, AFDO, NEHA, etc.), and/or academia (such as Ag extension)?

### **FSIS's Tools (20- 30 minutes):**

As discussed, FSIS wants to ensure the information it provides is clear, practical and useful for retailers. As such, we'd like to know your thoughts on the current guidance and outreach

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materials we have published. It's okay if you haven't seen or used any of these tools- just let us know.

**Brochure:**

1. Have you seen the FSIS brochure: Guidance for Controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) in Retail Delicatessens?
  - If so, where/how? (e.g., FSIS personnel handed to you at retail, conference handout, shared by a trade association or Extension, from FSIS website)  
[If not, we will pull up a copy to display on the screen.]
2. Overall, how clear is the information provided in the brochure? How practical?
3. What topic areas need improvement (e.g., break down and cleaning of the equipment)?

**Best Practices:**

1. Have you read the FSIS Best Practices for Controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* in Retail Delicatessens?
  - What was most helpful? Least helpful?
2. What additional information is needed, if any (e.g., specific areas)?

**Self-Assessment Tool:**

1. Have you used the FSIS Deli Self-Assessment Tool?
  - If so, did your use of the Self-Assessment Tool help you to determine whether there are appropriate procedures in place to control Lm, or whether you should adopt new procedures?
2. Are you familiar with similar types of tools developed by others?
  - If so, what are they?
  - Have you used them?
3. Are there particular questions in the assessment tool that are more helpful than others? Which ones? Why are the more helpful?

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4. What improvements, if any, are needed to make the Self-Assessment Tool more useful?

**Close-Out (5 minutes)**

Is there anything more that you would like to add about any of the topics that we've discussed?

Thank you for your time and participation in these focus groups.

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