

What is a Food Supply Veterinarian?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a program called Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS). The inspectors employed in the program are veterinarians who have the responsibility of making sure that the eggs, poultry, and meat we buy are wholesome and safe. There are about 1,200 veterinarians employed by the USDA, which is currently the largest employer of veterinarians in the world. Some of the specific responsibilities of USDA veterinarians are to:

- ensure that meat, poultry and egg producers comply with sanitation standards.
- create procedures that control health hazards, such as Salmonella, from entering our food supply and making people sick.
- inspect eggs, poultry, and meat to ensure that these products meet the requirements put in place by the federal government.
- enforce the Humane Slaughter Act. This act is a United States federal law designed to protect food animals during the moment of their slaughter. According to the law, animals must be stunned into unconsciousness to ensure a quick, relatively painless death.
- serve as epidemiologists, veterinarian pathologists, auditors, risk analysts, and security experts when required.

What is the history of food inspection?

In Germany between 1779 and 1819, Dr. Johann Peter Frank, a pioneer in social medicine, emphasized the need for a controlled slaughter of food animals. Controlled slaughter means performing an inspection of the animal made before death and another inspection of the meat afterwards to check for the presence of zoonotic diseases. These inspections were conducted by specially trained veterinarians. By 1880 in England and continental Europe the role of the veterinarian in protecting the public health was being accepted by physicians, demanded by society, and implemented into law by politicians.

In the United States, as cities grew and transportation systems developed, the distance increased between food production sites and the consumers. Meat was produced in large packing plants, shipped via interstate commerce, and also exported to Europe. In the late 1880s, England restricted importation of U.S. cattle for slaughter and several European countries excluded U.S. pork because of trichinosis—a parasitic disease caused by eating raw or undercooked pork that was infected with the larvae of a species of roundworm. In order to regain that overseas market, the U.S. enacted laws requiring health inspections of live animals before shipping.

In 1905, Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle* was published and described the unsanitary conditions in Chicago slaughterhouses. The book caused a public and political outcry and, as a result, meat sales around the country dropped by almost a third. In 1906, new laws were passed that required mandatory inspection of all meat and meat products. A total of 163 processing plants were placed under federal inspection; today, there are more than 6,000 meat processing plants subject to inspections.

Public health in the United States has improved significantly since the first meat inspection acts were enacted. Advances in animal health have increased animal production and the quality of the products we derive from them.

How do veterinarians help to ensure a safe food supply?

As Americans focus more and more on the safety of their food, the role of a food supply veterinarian continues to increase in importance. These veterinarians are well-trained in animal health, animal welfare, and the humane handling of animals when they are transported, unloaded, and managed at the production plants.

Veterinarians in food animal practice also help protect our food supply by working closely with farmers and ranchers to raise and ship healthy animals. These veterinarians are trained to prevent, diagnose, control, and eradicate animal diseases on the production units.

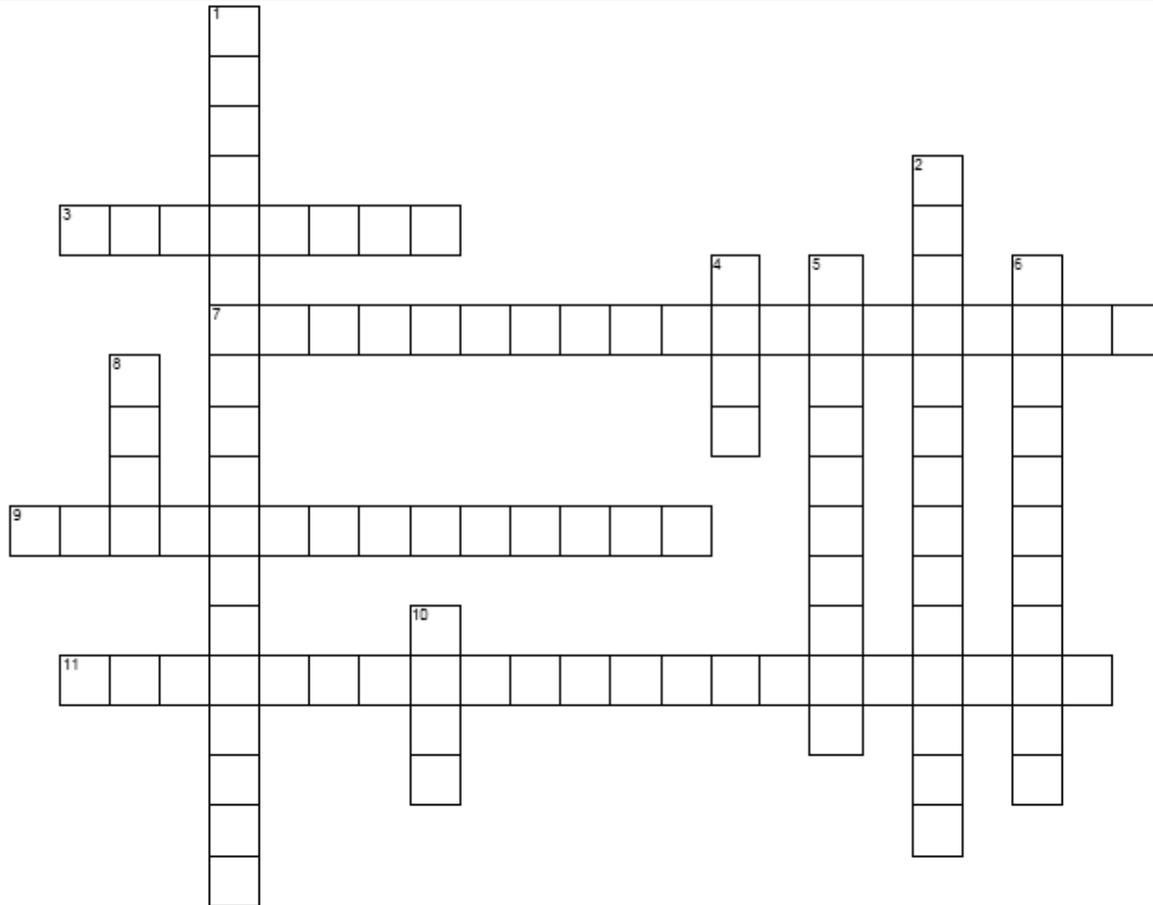
What role does NAIS play in a safe food supply?

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is a voluntary program sponsored by the United States government that helps to monitor the movement of food animals from farms and ranches to production facilities. NAIS makes it possible to quickly trace a diseased animal to its source to protect the health of livestock and poultry and the economic well-being of those industries.

When a disease outbreak occurs, animal health officials need to know:

- which animals are involved in a disease outbreak
- where the infected animals are currently located
- where the infected animals have been in the past few days or weeks
- what other animals might have been exposed to the disease

By choosing to participate in NAIS, food animal producers join a national disease response network built to protect animals, consumers, and the economic livelihood of producers against the devastation of an animal disease outbreak.



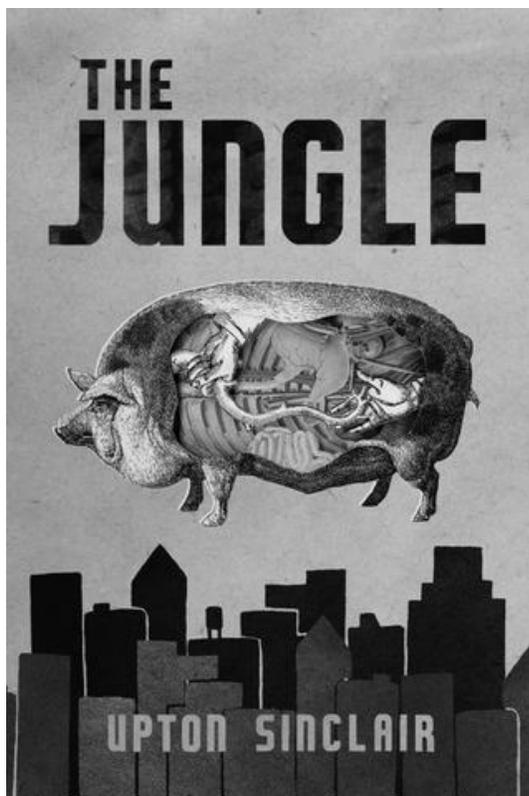
ACROSS

- 3** disease transmitted from animals to humans or vice versa
- 7** set of rules designed to prevent contact with the hazards of waste (two words)
- 9** facility where farm animals are processed
- 11** specialist in recognizing and understanding how and why diseases occur (two words)

DOWN

- 1** federal law designed to protect food animals at the time of their death (three words)
- 2** scientist who studies the relationships between the occurrence of disease and environmental influences
- 4** agency that ensures meat, poultry, and egg products are safe to consume
- 5** bacteria that causes food borne illness
- 6** parasitic disease caused by eating raw or undercooked pork
- 8** agency that develops and enforces policy on farming, agriculture, and food
- 10** government-run program to identify and track specific animals

Selection from Chapter 14 of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*



Jonas had _____ (tell) them how the meat that was _____ (taken) out of pickle would often be _____ (find) sour, and how they would rub it up with soda to take away the smell, and sell it to be _____ (eat) on free-lunch counters; also of all the miracles of chemistry which they performed, giving to any sort of meat, fresh or _____ (salt), whole or chopped, any color and any flavor and any odor they chose. In the _____ (pickle) of hams they had an ingenious apparatus, by which they saved time and increased the capacity of the plant--a machine _____ (consist) of a hollow needle _____ (attach) to a pump; by plunging this needle into the meat and working with his foot, a man could fill a ham

with pickle in a few seconds. And yet, in spite of this, there would be hams found spoiled, some of them with an odor so bad that a man could hardly bear to be in the room with them. To pump into these the packers had a second and much stronger pickle which destroyed the odor--a process known to the workers as "giving them thirty per cent." Also, after the hams had been smoked, there would be found some that had gone to the bad. Formerly these had been _____ (sell) as "Number Three Grade," but later on some ingenious person had hit upon a new device, and now they would extract the bone, about which the bad part generally lay, and insert in the hole a white-hot iron. The packers were always originating such schemes--they had what they called "boneless hams," which were all the odds and ends of pork _____ (stuff) into casings; and "California hams," which were the shoulders, with big knuckle joints, and nearly all the meat cut out; and fancy "skinned hams," which were made of the oldest hogs, whose skins were so heavy and coarse that no one would buy them--that is, until they had been _____ (cook) and _____ (chop) fine and labeled "head cheese!"