



# DAIRY PLANT SURVEY SERVICES



The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Dairy Grading Branch offers many services on a voluntary, user fee basis that help provide the assurance of wholesome and high-quality milk and dairy products. One service is a voluntary inspection program to evaluate sanitation of dairy plant facilities and equipment. Sanitary processing conditions are essential for wholesome, high quality dairy products. The Dairy Grading Branch plant survey service provides assurance to buyers and consumers that high quality and customer acceptability are maintained.

## WHAT IS A PLANT SURVEY?

The Dairy Plant Survey Service is a voluntary inspection service available to the dairy and related food industry. In order to participate, a plant's management agrees to allow periodic, unannounced inspections of their processing facilities and equipment by a licensed USDA survey inspector. A minimum of two inspections per year are required. However, depending upon the conditions observed, additional inspections may be conducted.

A plant survey is a comprehensive evaluation of:

- # the plant's facilities
  - # raw ingredients
  - # buildings
  - # equipment
  - # handling practices
  - # process controls
  - # employee practices
  - # sanitation
  - # packaging and storage practices

The surveys are conducted during plant operations and after cleaning to allow for the disassembly and inspection of processing equipment. A checklist of over 100 items is used for the inspection.

# WHY HAVE A PLANT SURVEY?

**Wholesomeness and Quality:** Everyone seeks top quality in the products they buy, and AMS can help manufacturers meet those requirements. The Dairy Grading Branch has established regulations and guidelines for the production and processing of dairy products. The production of wholesome, high quality dairy products begins with wholesome, high quality raw ingredients. These ingredients must be processed and packaged in a facility that maintains the highest levels of sanitation and processing control. The packaged finished products must then be stored under controlled conditions to maintain their wholesomeness and quality throughout distribution.

**USDA Approval and Listing in the Publication “Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service” :** Before a dairy plant can participate in any other inspection and grading services, they must successfully meet the minimum requirements of a plant survey. Plants which meet the requirements are assigned an approved status which governs the frequency at which additional inspections will be conducted. The approved statuses assigned are: Full Status, Approved - 6 Months, and Approved - 3 Months.

The publication “Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service” is updated quarterly. All plants that have been granted an approved status are listed. They are listed by State and display the product codes for which they are approved. The publication is widely distributed and has proven to be an excellent resource for food buyers, brokers and users of dairy products. A listing in the publication will broaden markets and increase sales.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about USDA dairy services, write to: USDA/AMS/Dairy Division, Dairy Grading Branch, Room 2746-South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW - Stop 0230, Washington, DC 20250-0230, or call the Dairy Grading Branch at 202-720-3171, fax 202-720-2643 or e-mail at First name.Last name@usda.gov (for example: Duane.Spomer@usda.gov.).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientations, marital or family status, political beliefs, parental status, or protected genetic information. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communications of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) Should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write the USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.