



USDA QUALITY SYSTEM ASSESSMENT (QSA) ANIMAL PROTEIN FREE VERIFICATION PROGRAM

1. GENERAL

The Animal Protein Free Verification (APFV) services are provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Livestock and Poultry (L&P) Program, Quality Assessment Division (QAD) under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act (AMA) of 1946, as amended, and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 7 Part 70, in cooperation with the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS).

This document specifies the requirements for the USDA-APFV Program. The USDA-APFV Program is a voluntary, user-fee service available to poultry producers and processors to provide third-party verification that poultry have never been fed animal protein, animal fats, or animal by-products. The interpretation of by-products will include any use of fishmeal or fish by-products. USDA-APFV Program Manuals are submitted by clients for approval, and are monitored by the L&P Program, QAD.

All requirements of the USDA-APFV Program are generic and are intended to be applicable to all clients, regardless of type, size, and product provided. Any requirement(s) of this Program that cannot be applied due to the nature of the client and its product can be considered for exclusion.

2. SCOPE

These requirements apply to the auditing and approval of feed mills, production facilities, ranches, farms, slaughter and/or processing facilities and any other entities in the process requesting poultry products be verified as Animal Protein Free (APF) under this Program; specifically, that poultry have never been fed animal protein, animal fats, or animal by-products.

3. REFERENCES

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

- 3.1 QAD 1000 Procedure: *Quality Systems Verification Programs, General Policies and Procedures*
- 3.2 QAD Addendum: *USDA APFV Program*
- 3.3 QAD 1002 Procedure: *USDA Quality System Assessment Program*
- 3.4 [USDA AMS: Animal Protein Free Verification Program website](#)
- 3.5 [USDA FSIS: Export Library Requirements by Country website](#)
- 3.6 [Official Listing of Eligible Suppliers USDA-APFV Program.](#)



4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Clients shall meet all applicable policies, procedures, and requirements outlined in this document and the QAD's *QSVF General Policies and Procedures*.

4.2 Clients shall provide access to all processes and areas, records, and personnel for the purposes of initial audit approval, surveillance, re-approval, and the resolution of complaints.

4.3 The Division shall meet all applicable policies, procedures, and requirements outlined in this document and the QAD's *QSVF General Policies and Procedures*, and referenced documents as applicable.

5. LISTING OF APPROVED APFV PROGRAMS

5.1 The QAD provides public information about the current status of a client's program in the *Official Listing of Eligible Suppliers USDA-APFV Program*.

5.2 The *Official Listing* is maintained on the USDA-APFV website and contains information including:

1. Client's name or position title;
2. Client's address or corporate address;
3. Client's contact information including telephone number, fax number, and email address, when available;
4. Effective date (date originally approved);
5. Renewal date (date approval expires); and
6. Scope, including locations, and services.

5.3 In addition:

1. If the client is undergoing an initial audit, the statement "Under Review" is included.
2. If the client is under suspension, the scope of the suspension, the effective date of the suspension and the following statement are included: "Under Suspension – Agricultural products certified under the program prior to suspension remain certified. No additional products may be certified while the suspension is in effect."
3. If the client has requested to cancel service, the following statement is included:



"Requested to Cancel Service – Agricultural products certified under the program are eligible until [date]." The date referenced is the date that cancellation is effective, normally the date that the surveillance or reassessment was to occur.

6. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The client shall submit a documented program that addresses the USDA-APFV Program requirements as outlined in the following clauses.

6.1 Quality System Assessment

Clients who wish to meet the specified APF requirements under the APFV Program shall meet these requirements through an approved USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) Program. To operate an approved USDA-QSA Program, a company must submit a documented program that meets the program requirements. The USDA-QSA Program provides companies that supply agricultural products and services the opportunity to assure customers of their ability to provide consistent quality products or services. It is limited to programs or portions of programs where specified product requirements are supported by a documented quality management system.

6.2 Documented APF Program

6.2.1 To be eligible for the APFV Program, the client shall submit an APF manual that documents the operating procedures which: 1) identifies the APF product by suitable means, 2) controls the segregation through product development (APF feed at feed mill to APF product leaving processor), and 3) assures only APF poultry products are delivered.

Note: APF product refers to the raw materials through to the finished product, which includes APF feed; APF Poultry; and APF poultry products, as applicable to the scope of the APFV Program.

6.2.2 The program shall be signed and dated by a lead representative of the company. Relevant portions of the APF manual shall be readily available for reference by persons supporting the system.

The documented procedure must describe the overall method for:

1. Identifying the APF product throughout product development, where appropriate;
2. Identifying the APF product status with respect to monitoring and measurement requirements; and,
3. Controlling and recording the unique identification of the APF product.



6.2.3 The unique identification of the APF product shall be such that the identification will transfer through all phases of product development, from receipt into the program through production to delivery (i.e., feed mill to production to processing). The applicant shall maintain records of all APF products as identified and records of all changes of identities.

6.2.4 The key requirements of the APFV Program are:

1. APF feed shall be identified and segregated at all times from non-APF feed at the feed mill.
2. APF poultry shall not be fed any animal protein, fats, or by-products at any time during their life cycle and be identified and segregated from non-APF poultry at production.
3. APF poultry products shall be identified and segregated at all times from non-APF poultry products at processing.
4. APF feed and APF poultry shall be identified and segregated at all times from non-APF feed and APF poultry during transportation.
5. APF feed, APF poultry, and APF product shall be traceable to origin from any point in the process.
6. Procedures for documenting the results of inspections and tests shall be developed.
7. Minimum of one APF mock recall per year to test and improve the system.
8. Clients follow their documented procedures and recordkeeping activities as prescribed in their APF manual.

Note: If an APF material is contained within all the facility's products, it is not necessary to identify and segregate the APF material.

SEGREGATION STRATEGIES

Below are segregation strategies that clients may consider as they develop an APF manual. These strategies include specific ways of keeping APF and non-APF material apart and controlling the flow of APF material in the facility. This list is not all-inclusive and is supplied for the purposes of guidance.

- Having the receiving department identify or mark packages known to contain APF materials.
- Identify and record all APF materials with unusual or different lot numbers. This should be done when APF materials are received.
- Track APF lot numbers throughout production. Link APF lot numbers to finished APF products.
- Only allow rework containing APF materials to go into products that contain APF materials.



- The easiest way to separate APF material in production areas is by setting aside storage areas for dedicated or special purpose use.
- Color-coded stickers will make this segregation clear.
- One way to avoid commingling is to schedule unique production runs for processing specific APF products. Another way is to provide physical barriers between APF and non-APF materials.

6.3 Recordkeeping

1. Documented procedures are maintained to assure all APFV Program requirements are met prior to transfer of ownership.
2. Records demonstrating conformance with APFV program shall be maintained.
3. Records may be electronic or hard copy.
4. Records shall be maintained for 2 years after the close of the fiscal/calendar year in which they were created.
5. Records shall be stored in a manner so as to prevent loss, damage or alteration.
6. Records shall be made readily available to auditors.

Note: Poultry is defined as any kind of domesticated bird, including, but not being limited to, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons and guineas.

6.4 Additional Requirements for Feed Mills

6.4.1 Ingredient Sources

1. A complete list of feed ingredients shall be documented in order to determine conformance with the program.
2. Feed mills shall operate according to current Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's).
3. Records shall indicate the source of feed ingredients.
4. Records shall indicate feed ingredients are in compliance with the program.
5. Testing

APF Feed that is produced in the manufacturing process shall be periodically tested to ensure feed used in the production of APF poultry is in conformance with this program.



6.5 Additional Requirements for Production Facilities

6.5.1 Controls and Segregation

1. Procedures shall be developed and documented to assure APF feed and poultry are not commingled with non-APF feed or poultry.
2. Non-APF poultry shall be adequately segregated from APF poultry when both types of poultry are produced in the same vicinity.
3. Procedures shall be documented to ensure feeds with animal protein; fats or by-products do not commingle with APF poultry feeds. Such procedures shall meet the guidelines set forth in the FDA GMP's for feed manufacturers.

6.5.2 Verification

1. Procedures for the control of APF poultry during shipment will be documented.
2. Controls will assure that APF poultry are adequately segregated from non-APF poultry at each stage of shipping.

6.6 Requirements for Processing Facilities

6.6.1 Production Controls

1. Each step in the process where controls are needed to assure that only APF poultry are slaughtered and processed shall be described complete with frequencies of monitoring and means of verification that the controls are effective.
2. Procedures shall be developed and documented to assure APF poultry or poultry products are not commingled with non-APF poultry. E.g. chiller segregation procedures, line separations, sequencing, etc.
3. Procedures shall be documented to account for poultry or poultry products excluded from the APFV Program.

6.6.2 Shipment

1. Procedures for the control of APF products during shipment will be documented.
2. Controls will assure that APF poultry or poultry products are positively identified and segregated from non-APF poultry or poultry products at all stages of shipping.
3. Procedures shall be documented for conducting necessary inspections, tests and record verifications to assure poultry or poultry products comply with program requirements.



7. EXPORT CERTIFICATION OF APF POULTRY

The USDA APFV Program was developed to assist the U.S. Poultry Industry in marketing their products as APF in the U.S. However, with continued compliance in the APFV Program, eligible poultry products may be certified by FSIS inspectors on official certificates when requested by the client. A complete listing of approved systems/clients is available on the [USDA: Business Listings website](#).

Plant management shall notify the FSIS Inspector-in-Charge of the request for certification of APF poultry. The request shall contain the following information:

1. Product name
2. Lot number
3. Production date
4. Size of lot produced
5. Size of lot to be certified
6. Grower identification

After verification of eligibility, the FSIS Inspector-in-Charge will provide the proper certification for the eligible product on the export certificate. The following statement is to be used:

“Poultry and poultry products covered by this certificate have not been fed with animal protein, animal fats, or animal by-products.”

Jeff Waite, Branch Chief
Quality Assessment Division
Livestock and Poultry Program

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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