

Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program

Frequently Asked Questions

“In the event of a large-scale foreign animal disease outbreak, such as African swine fever, we will need a trained cadre of sample collectors to help Federal and State animal health officials determine where disease is present and to support the permitted movement of animals. The Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program benefits from the oversight of USDA Category II accredited veterinarians and will significantly increase the number of qualified people who can correctly collect, package, and submit samples so we have confidence in the results. This training program was funded by USDA’s National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, which fosters collaboration with animal health partners to implement high-value projects that enhance our ability to prevent, detect, prepare and respond to foreign animal diseases.”

Dr. Jack Shere
Associate Administrator
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs) request that prior to participating in the program, USDA Category II accredited veterinarians contact the SAHO in the state(s) where they plan to train or use Certified Swine Sample Collectors to confirm their eligibility to participate in the program and any additional requirements that exist.

Do Certified Swine Sample Collectors need to be trained and certified prior to a foreign animal disease outbreak?

For optimal preparedness, it is strongly encouraged that individuals be trained and certified prior to a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak. This is part of the strategy behind becoming certified in a non-emergency time. During an FAD outbreak, USDA Category II accredited veterinarians may not have time to perform the necessary training and State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs) may not accept or recognize new trainees during an outbreak.

Is the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program only available to those participating in the Secure Pork Supply Plan?

No, the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program is a stand-alone program and participation in Secure Pork Supply is not required.

How do I become a Certified Swine Sample Collector?

To become a Certified Swine Sample Collector (CSSC), trainees must be approved by a USDA Category II accredited veterinarian with swine experience, and complete the CSSC curriculum. The curriculum includes classroom instruction, passing a written exam, and hands-on training. Trainees are encouraged to have a valid Pork Quality Assurance Plus certification.

I have completed the training to be a CSSC. Can I...

Collect samples on multiple farms?

Certified Swine Sample Collectors can collect samples from any swine operation as requested by the USDA Category II accredited veterinarian who is responsible for sample submission. Certification stays with the trained individual, even if they change employment or move to a different state.

Collect samples for multiple USDA Category II accredited veterinarians?

Certified Swine Sample Collectors can collect samples for multiple USDA Category II accredited veterinarians.

During an outbreak, how will I know which samples to collect and when to collect them?

The SAHO will determine when Certified Swine Sample Collectors will be allowed to collect samples in their state and where the samples are sent for testing during an FAD outbreak. The SAHO will provide guidance on testing protocols to be used during the outbreak including the type and quantity of samples to be collected and any specialized sampling supplies to be used (i.e., sample transport media, blood tubes, etc.).

Is an individual required to be trained to collect all diagnostic sample types within Tier 1 to be certified?

Yes. Individuals must be trained to collect and submit all Tier 1 sample types to become certified. If individuals wish to collect and submit a Tier 2 sample type, they must be trained on all Tier 1 and Tier 2 sample types to become certified.

Can the hands-on sample collection training be conducted individually or with a group?

Both group and individual training is acceptable for the hands-on sample collection training component of the curriculum. Group trainings can offer the unique benefit of allowing trainees to see variations in pig anatomy that they will commonly experience in the field. Similar benefits may be achieved through individual trainings where samples are collected from multiple pigs.

I am only responsible for packaging and shipping samples that have been collected. Do I need to be become a Certified Swine Sample Collector?

No. Individuals only responsible for packaging and shipping samples that have been collected do not need to complete the full curriculum and become certified. However, the CSSC program has resources specific to packaging and shipping samples that can be used for training on this topic.

How long is my certification valid? How do I maintain my certification?

Certification is valid for 1 year with recertification required annually. Immediate recertification is required if a veterinary diagnostic lab informs the USDA Category II accredited veterinarian that submitted samples are deemed unacceptable. To become recertified, the Certified Swine Sample Collector must demonstrate competency collecting samples as determined by their trainer. Recertifying individuals must also receive training on any new sample collection types added to the curriculum to maintain their certification.

What is a USDA Category II accredited veterinarian?

A USDA Category II accredited veterinarian is a veterinarian who has completed additional training under the National Veterinary Accreditation Program to become federally accredited. State governments authorize these accredited veterinarians to perform certain official regulatory functions, such as animal inspections, diagnostic testing, certifications for travel or export, or other US animal health programs and services on their behalf. USDA Category II accredited veterinarians can carry out accreditation duties on all animal species, including swine.

As a USDA Category II accredited veterinarian, how do I begin to conduct training for samplers?

In addition to being a USDA Category II accredited veterinarian, trainers must have one of the following:

- a business relationship with the owner of the pigs on farms where individuals are trained **or**
- perform training by request of the site's USDA Category II accredited veterinarian under whose direction the collectors will be submitting samples.

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Do I have to be accredited in the state where I conduct CSSC trainings?

Trainers can conduct trainings in any state regardless of where they are accredited. However, the veterinarian under whom the samples are submitted is required to be licensed and accredited in the state where the samples are collected.

As a CSSC Trainer, how do I access the exams?

Exams and answer keys for the CSSC training program are password protected and can be accessed at securepork.org/training-materials/disease-monitoring-sample. Please contact the SAHO from the state where you are training CSSCs to get the password for access.

How do I track those who I certify and what about recertifications?

USDA Category II-accredited veterinarians who perform the training must record and retain the information of trained individuals and share it with the SAHOs in the state where the individual will be collecting samples. You should work with your SAHO to make sure the list of Certified Swine Sample Collectors is routinely updated.

I am a large animal technician for a swine veterinary clinic and my duties are performed in two states. During an outbreak, can I collect and submit samples from more than one state?

Yes, a Certified Swine Sample Collector may collect samples from more than one state if the USDA Category II accredited veterinarian they are submitting samples under is licensed and accredited in the state where the samples are collected and the state has agreed to utilize CSSCs.

As an independent producer, can I be trained to collect samples?

Yes, anyone who is approved by their USDA Category II accredited veterinarian, and successfully completes the training curriculum can become a Certified Swine Sample Collector.

As a field manager, I currently collect samples for PRRS testing on the sites I visit routinely. Why do I need special training to collect the same samples for an FAD?

Participation in the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program assures state and federal animal health officials that individuals have been trained through a standardized process by USDA Category II accredited veterinarians working in the pork industry to correctly collect, handle, and submit samples.

Will the resources be available for me to reference after I am trained?

Yes, all program training materials can be accessed at securepork.org/training-materials/disease-monitoring-sample at any time.

Who developed this training?

The Certified Swine Sample Collector training program standards were developed by a working group composed of eight SAHOs, veterinary practitioners, producers, and representatives from each of the five project collaborators. The program standards were distributed widely for review and input prior to being finalized.

Collaborators on the project are Iowa State University Swine Medicine Education Center, Iowa State University Center for Food Security and Public Health, American Association of Swine Veterinarians, National Pork Board, Multistate Partnership for Security in Agriculture, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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