

# Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program

## Program Standards

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## **Purpose**

During a large-scale foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak, federal and state resources will be in extremely high demand. When this occurs, pork industry veterinarians, producers, and caretakers become critical resources in the sample collection process on their respective production site(s). A national swine sample collection training program will assure state and federal animal health officials that producers and caretakers have been trained to correctly collect, handle, and submit samples prior to an outbreak by category II accredited veterinarians working in the pork industry.

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*“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*

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## **Background**

Currently in the United States, swine-focused veterinarians either collect or oversee the collection of samples from swine for diagnostic and surveillance testing for domestic diseases on production sites. During an FAD outbreak, biosecurity will be enhanced, and the quantity and frequency of samples collected will increase. This would make it difficult for the few FAD diagnosticians (FADD) and swine-focused veterinarians to adequately perform in a timely manner all the necessary diagnostic investigations and sample collections for the large number of swine farms involved. It will also be difficult for veterinarians to perform the necessary surveillance or regulatory tasks during an FAD response while also maintaining ongoing herd health and animal welfare programs.

## **Rationale for Training Program**

During an FAD outbreak, producers and caretakers could collect and submit samples for diagnostic and surveillance testing. Training candidates prior to an outbreak and maintaining their sample collection proficiency on a continual basis will ensure they are prepared to respond as an outbreak unfolds. Increasing capacity in this area will alleviate the workload on FADDs and swine veterinarians. It will also result in a more efficient response and implementation of the Secure Pork Supply Plan.

Without such a training and certification program, the FAD response could be greatly prolonged. An inadequate disease response inflicts great harm on the industry long-term, negatively impacts animal welfare, jeopardizes livelihoods, threatens food security for consumers, and significantly hinders the U.S. economy.

## **Training Program**

### **Overview**

Category II accredited veterinarians will train producers and caretakers how to properly collect samples from swine for diagnostic and surveillance purposes. Veterinarians will use a standardized curriculum and stakeholders can be assured all Certified Swine Sample Collectors are consistently trained and certified.

During an FAD outbreak, state animal health officials (SAHOs) will determine when Certified Swine Sample Collectors will be authorized to collect samples in their state. Guidance on testing protocols will be provided by animal health officials.

### **Curriculum**

The following components may be delivered together at one time or in separate sessions:

1. Classroom instruction (in-person preferred but virtual is acceptable):
  - a) Setting: Trainers can perform the classroom instruction either on the farm, in another setting, or virtually if needed. A group or individual setting is acceptable.
  - b) Curriculum: Trainers will review the videos and handouts available on [www.securepork.org](http://www.securepork.org) in English or Spanish. These resources are available online for trainees to review anytime. Required curriculum for all trainees includes:
    - Three videos addressing the clinical signs associated with African swine fever, classical swine fever, and foot-and-mouth disease.
    - Biosecurity
    - Sample packaging and submission
    - Videos and handouts demonstrating collection of all the sample types listed for either Tier:
      - Tier 1: Oral fluids, nasal swabs, blood, blood swab and processing fluids
      - Tier 2: Tier 1 samples plus spleen, lymph node, tonsil, tracheal swabs, vesicular fluid

Each resource includes a list of the supplies needed as well as the collection process instructions. Resources addressing animal restraint and necropsy are also available. These topics are required when specified by the sample type training resources (e.g. animal restraint required for blood collection).

- c) Written Examination: Each trainee must pass a written examination reviewing the entire curriculum specific to Tier 1 or Tier 2. Trainees must achieve a score of 80% to pass the exam. The trainer will score the exams. Trainees may take the exam up to 3 consecutive times before retraining is required. Trainers are strongly encouraged to review missed questions with the trainee between exam attempts to help them understand the material. Written exams will be available in English and Spanish. Trainers are not required to keep the scored exams on file but may choose to do so.
2. Hands-on training: This should occur after the classroom session and be conducted in person on farm or another location. A group or individual training is acceptable. For all sample types except processing fluid and vesicular fluid, the trainer will demonstrate sample collection techniques. Trainees then will practice these techniques and demonstrate proficiency. Although not required, a checklist is available for use by the trainer while scoring proficiency. The trainer can retain the completed checklist as a form of documentation if desired. Trainers will also demonstrate preparation and packaging of samples based on guidelines from the NAHLN lab along with reviewing/instructing trainees how to complete the appropriate submission form(s). Because testicles and tails will be collected by on-farm personnel who routinely perform these procedures and then given to the CSSC for fluid extraction and packaging, processing fluid sample collection requires only classroom instruction. Due to the infrequency in which vesicles are evident in the field, vesicular fluid sample collection requires only classroom instruction.

## **Trainer Qualifications and Responsibilities**

1. Sample Collection Trainer Qualifications: Trainers must meet qualifications under sections a and b.
    - a) Be a USDA category II accredited veterinarian with swine experience.
      - 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.
    - b) Meet one of the two criteria:
      - Have a business relationship with the owner of the pigs on farms where individuals are trained.
  - OR
  - Be requested to perform training by the site's category II accredited veterinarian under whom the collectors will be submitting samples.
2. Sample Collection Trainer Responsibilities:
    - a) Schedule and conduct sample collection training sessions with interested producers and caretakers.
    - b) Follow the program standards when conducting training sessions.
    - c) Record and report the names and contact information of those who have successfully completed training and annual recertifications.

## **Trainee Qualifications and Responsibilities**

1. Certified Swine Sample Collector Qualifications:
  - a) Be approved by a category II accredited veterinarian,
  - b) Have a valid PQA Plus certification,
  - c) Attend a Certified Swine Sample Collector training course,
  - d) Pass a written exam covering the training curriculum, and
  - e) Successfully complete hands-on evaluation demonstrating competency to collect, package, and submit samples.
2. Certified Swine Sample Collector Responsibilities:
  - a) Participate in training sessions and pass evaluations.
  - b) Properly collect, package, and submit samples when given permission to do so by the SAHO during an FAD outbreak. Samples can only be submitted under a category II accredited veterinarian in the state(s) in which the veterinarian is authorized.
  - c) Become recertified as required.
3. Certified Swine Sample Collectors can collect samples from any swine operation as requested by the accredited veterinarian under whom the samples will be submitted.
4. Certified Swine Sample Collectors can collect samples for multiple category II accredited veterinarians.
5. Certification stays with the Certified Swine Sample Collector if they change employment.

## **Recertification**

1. Timeline: Recertification is required annually. Immediate recertification is required if a veterinary diagnostic lab informs the category II accredited veterinarian that submitted samples are deemed unacceptable.
2. Content:
  - a) If new resources have been introduced since previous training, then the new curriculum needs to be taught with the same approach as the initial training.
  - b) If the resources have not been updated since previous training, then recertification consists of the Certified Swine Sample Collector demonstrating competency collecting samples as determined by their trainer.

## **Recording and Reporting**

1. Category II accredited veterinarians who perform the training will be required to record and retain the information of trained individuals and share this information with the SAHOs in the state in which the individual will be collecting samples.
2. Category II accredited veterinarians are encouraged to work with their SAHO to make sure the list of Certified Swine Sample Collectors is routinely updated.

3. The following Certified Swine Sample Collector information needs to be recorded and reported to SAHOs:
  - a) Name
  - b) Address
  - c) Contact information including email and phone number
  - d) Company affiliation, if applicable
  - e) Veterinarian who performed the training
  - f) Sample type(s) individual is certified to collect and date of most recent certification
  - g) PQA Plus certification number

## **Role of Category II Accredited Veterinarians**

Category II accredited veterinarians may be the trainer and/or the category II accredited veterinarian under whom the samples are submitted. Prior to participating in the program, USDA category II accredited veterinarians are required to contact the animal health officials in the state(s) in which they plan to train or utilize CSSCs to confirm their eligibility to participate in the program and any additional requirements that exist.

Category II accredited veterinarians should be confident in the abilities of the Certified Swine Sample Collectors who are submitting samples under their supervision. Following the correct sample collection protocol and technique is essential to the integrity of this certification program and an FAD response. The Category II accredited veterinarian is responsible for the samples collected and submitted by Certified Swine Sample Collectors under their supervision.

## **Role of Animal Health Officials**

SAHOs 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.

SAHOs are encouraged to have discussions with accredited veterinarians who practice in their state as to how the Certified Swine Sample Collectors will be used during an FAD outbreak. SAHOs may want to consider several factors when communicating with accredited veterinarians in their state:

- Direct how to submit the names of trained Certified Swine Sample Collectors.
- Provide guidance on testing protocols to be used during the outbreak.
- Remind that guidance on testing protocols may vary by state and with the stage of the outbreak.
- Direct when and where this information will be communicated during an outbreak.

## **Sample Collection Training Summary**

The Certified Swine Sample Collection training program outlined here can be used to address the critical need to build diagnostic and disease response capacity. This approach can be used to rapidly and consistently train farm personnel and other designated personnel in diagnostic and surveillance sample collection to be utilized during an FAD.

## Funding

Development of the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program and resources was funded by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service through the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program. Spanish translation of program materials was funded by the Pork Checkoff.

## Disclaimer

Members of the Program Standards Working Group developed this document. Our goal is to work toward consensus at a national level. By developing this program at a national level, we focus on building consistency for those who will be moving animals interstate for purposes of feeding or slaughter. We are working to build a program that will foster trust that individuals have been trained to a high and consistent standard. We are looking for feedback from anyone who believes they may use the program either as a SAHO, an accredited veterinarian, or a producer who will need on-farm personnel to be trained. Please send any comments or feedback to Pam Zaabel at [pzaabel@pork.org](mailto:pzaabel@pork.org).

Members of the Program Standards Working Group support the Certified Swine Sample Collector training program. Working Group members consented to having their name listed below and they welcome questions if you feel comfortable reaching out to them.

Working Group Members:

Cheryl Collins	MI Dept of Agri & Rural Development
Todd Tedrow	SD Animal Industry Board
Sandra Gilmore	Illinois Department of Agriculture
Del Wilmot	USDA
Angela Lackie	Texas Animal Health Commission
Kelli Werling	BOAH- Indiana
Brian Hoefs	BOAH-Minnesota
Tim Smith	USDA
Jim Kittrell	NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Troy Brick	Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Paul Yeske	Swine Vet Center
Mike Pierdon	Lancaster Swine Health Services
Rebecca Robbins	Seaboard Foods*
Nic Lauterbach	Smithfield
Jim Roth	Center for Food Security and Public Health
Justin Brown	Swine Medicine Education Center
Sherrie Webb	American Association of Swine Veterinarians
Lucia Hunt	Multistate Partnership for Security in Agriculture
Pam Zaabel	National Pork Board

\* indicates previous employment