

Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program

Program Standards

Updated April 2025

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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, caretakers, and industry partners (such as extension agents) become critical resources in the sample collection process on production site(s). This national swine sample collection training program will assure state and federal animal health officials that individuals have been trained by category II accredited veterinarians working in the pork industry to correctly collect, handle, and submit samples prior to an outbreak.

“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*

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, caretakers, and industry partners could collect and submit samples for diagnostic and surveillance testing when authorized by their State Animal Health Official. Training candidates prior to an outbreak and maintaining their sample collection proficiency will ensure they are prepared to respond as an outbreak unfolds. Increasing capacity in this area will ease 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 and have a negative impact on rapid disease diagnosis and containment. 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, caretakers, and industry partners 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 (CSSCs) 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. If a recording is utilized for virtual training, the trainer needs to continue to facilitate discussion and answer questions during the training. Online training which occurs without the trainer present virtually is not acceptable.
 - b) Curriculum: Trainers will review the videos and handouts available on www.securepork.org in English or Spanish. These resources are available online for trainees to review anytime. Required curricula for all trainees includes:
 - Three videos addressing the clinical signs associated with African swine fever, classical swine fever, and foot-and-mouth disease.
 - Biosecurity
 - Restraint
 - Pooling samples
 - Sample submission
 - Videos and handouts demonstrating collection of all the sample types listed for either Tier:

- Tier 1: Oral fluid collection, nasal swabs, blood collection, blood ear swab, processing fluids, and oral swabs
- Tier 2: Tier 1 samples plus spleen swabs, spleen, lymph nodes, inguinal lymph nodes, tonsil, and vesicular fluid
- Optional training: Tracheal swabs, nasal wipe, udder wipe, cerebrospinal fluid, meningeal swab, shower in/out
- A trainee must be trained in all the sample types within either Tier 1 or Tier 2.

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 may utilize the CSSC resources while taking the exam. 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. Testing accommodations may be made at the discretion of the trainer. 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. Trainers are encouraged to hold hands-on training as soon as possible following the classroom training, but the timing is up to the discretion of the trainer. 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 below
 - 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 three 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.

OR

- Be requested to perform training by the state animal health official under whom the collectors will be submitting samples.

2. Sample Collection Trainer Responsibilities:

- a) Schedule and conduct sample collection training sessions with interested producers, caretakers, and industry partners.
- 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 recertification trainings.

Trainee Qualifications and Responsibilities

1. Certified Swine Sample Collector Qualifications:

- a) Be approved by a category II accredited veterinarian.
- b) Encouraged to have a valid PQA Plus certification*.
- c) Attend a Certified Swine Sample Collector training course.
- d) Pass a written exam covering the training curriculum.
- e) Successfully complete hands-on evaluation demonstrating competency to collect, package, and submit samples.

* If the CSSC isn't PQA Plus certified, it is strongly encouraged that they are familiar with site/production company animal welfare, handling, and biosecurity procedures or accompanied by an individual with PQA Plus certification when collecting samples on the farm.

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 or submitted under a state animal health official.
- c) Become recertified as required.

3. Certified Swine Sample Collectors can collect samples from any swine operation as requested by the accredited veterinarian or a state animal health official under whom the samples will be submitted.

4. Certified Swine Sample Collectors can collect samples for multiple category II accredited veterinarians or as requested by a state animal health official.
5. Certification stays with the Certified Swine Sample Collector if they change employment.

Recertification

1. Timeline: Recertification is required every three years and is due three years from the date trained. This renewal can occur 30 days prior to the renewal date with a 30-day grace period following the renewal due date. Immediate recertification is required if a veterinary diagnostic lab informs the category II accredited veterinarian that submitted samples are deemed unacceptable.
2. Recertification Process:
 - a) If new resources have been introduced since previous training: 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: Recertification consists of the Certified Swine Sample Collector demonstrating competency collecting samples as determined by a trainer. Examples might include the veterinarian signing off on the recertification if the CSSC has been effectively collecting samples for endemic diseases during the previous year, or instead the veterinarian may decide to observe the CSSC demonstrating proficiency in sample collection. Recertification proficiency can also be demonstrated virtually through video or photo demonstration of sample collection.
 - c) Recertification can be performed by any trainer who meets the trainer qualifications defined under "Trainer Qualifications and Responsibilities" section in this document. It is the responsibility of the category II accredited veterinarian under whom the samples will be submitted to ensure the CSSCs are competent.

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 (work 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 (either Tier 1 or Tier 2) and date of most recent certification
 - g) PQA Plus certification number, if applicable
4. Trainers do not need to record when a trainee has been trained to collect optional samples such as tracheal swabs.

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 or state animal health official 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 veterinarians that guidance on testing protocols may vary by state and with the stage of the outbreak.
- Explain 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 response.

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 for the two years of the grant period. Resources developed during the third year of the project and Spanish translation of program materials were 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 or industry partners to be trained. Please send any comments or feedback to Meredith Petersen at mpetersen@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.

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* indicates previous employment

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