

AFFIDAVIT

My name is Joe Ferguson. I am a federal inspector for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). I am submitting this affidavit freely and voluntarily to Alyssa Doom, who has identified herself to me as the investigator for the Food Integrity Campaign of the Government Accountability Project. I am doing so without any threats, inducements or coercion. I authorize the publication of this statement contingent upon the redaction of my name, and the name and location of the establishment to which I refer. I am making this statement to express my disapproval for USDA's pilot program for hog inspection, HIMP.

In my 23 years of service to the agency, I have gained a great deal of experience working as an inspector. I have worked in beef plants, turkey plants, and most recently pork plants. I am currently stationed at a plant that is one of five hog slaughter plants in the U.S. operating under HIMP, USDA's high-speed slaughter pilot program. It is my personal opinion that there is no inspection of carcasses under this program.

When the agency switched to the HACCP model, they gave up command and control and gave the regulated industry free reign to do as they please. And now even more of USDA's control will be lost if the agency switches to the HIMP model. USDA's supervision in the HIMP pilot plants is limited. We went from having 7 inspectors assigned to the slaughter line to only 3 physically on the line now. Our physical inspection duties are now performed by plant sorters that work for the company.

While federal inspectors have a lot of training and education, plant sorters are not properly trained by the plant to conduct inspection procedures. Instead of incising lymph nodes, they just whack them. They don't know how to cut them. This is dangerous because incising lymph nodes is an important part of detecting diseases that could harm consumers. On the viscera line, where the animals' internal organs are supposed to be inspected for diseases and defects, they don't look at all of the parts. They only shake the heart to see if there is any fecal matter or ingesta on it. They could be missing a lot. Personally, I will not eat any products that bear the name of the company for which this meat is produced—I don't

think that it is wholesome or safe to consume.

Line speeds are running 1,300 carcasses per hour and the company is killing as many as 19,000 hogs per day. This is a dramatic increase from previously, when they ran at about 1,100 carcasses per hour. It's impossible to see any defects now. We used to be stop the line for bile contamination, chronic pleuritis, hair/toenails/scurf and have these defects trimmed/removed, under HIMP, these are considered "Other Consumer Protections" and we are no longer allowed to stop the line so they may be removed. Put em in the cooler and ultimately out to the consumer. The only time we are allowed to stop the line is for food safety concerns, and even then we get yelled at. It's just nuts.

HIMP was flawed from the get-go. It goes all the way back to the baseline studies. When they analyzed the data to develop the performance standards for the program, including how to categorize food safety issues and defects, the data was skewed. A plant employee was assigned to retrieve the viscera and he/she would just grab whatever was available, they were not looking at the correct viscera sets for the carcasses they examined. The new inspection model is an obvious example of the revolving door between the industry and the agency. Looking all the way back, one of the people who helped conduct the research for the program at the Research Triangle Institute was a retired FSIS circuit supervisor veterinarian. Also, one of the members of the board of directors for the company who has 3 plants operating under the pilot model is Elsa Murano, a former Under Secretary for Food Safety for USDA.

When the inspectors try to take corrective action at the plant, we get no support from our supervisors. I tell them that I am working for the consumer, not the company. There is no stopping the industry. The inspector's union negotiates memorandums of understanding (MOU) for how HIMP is supposed to be implemented but nobody is abiding by these MOUs. For example, certain baseline performance standards are supposed to be met by the company, but this isn't the case. In fact, the agency hasn't reexamined the performance of the plant

where I am stationed in over a decade. Line speeds have increased to 1300 hogs per hour since then.

The swine Himp program is out of control and is a sham the career bureaucrats have drafted to get rid of inspectors. FSIS hierarchy is in bed with the regulated industry. The companies are now calling the shots. Pretty soon the agency will have no authority. After working in this plant for more than ten years, I definitely do not support its expansion to the rest of the industry.

I, Joe Ferguson, have reviewed this statement of 4 pages and hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Dated this 28__ day of September, 2014.

____Joe Ferguson_____

(Signature)

Sworn and subscribed before me this __ day of
September, 2014.

(Notary Signature)

